

REORGANIZING CIVIL SOCIETY: POPULAR MOVEMENTS, THE STATE, AND  
MUNICIPALITIES IN POSTAUTHORITARIAN CHILE

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REORGANIZING CIVIL SOCIETY: POPULAR MOVEMENTS, MUNICIPALITIES,  
AND THE STATE IN POST-DICTATORSHIP CHILE

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This study examines the dilemmas of democratic development in post-dictatorship Chile through a study of popular sector municipalities in urban Santiago. Since the transition to democracy in 1990, municipal government has emerged to become a key arena for popular participation. The Neo-Tocquevillian discourse upon which post-transition democracy is based suggests that local governments can constitute schools for learning citizenship practices and for the creation of a civic culture. In Chile, as elsewhere in Latin America, a hegemonic discourse of participation has emerged that is anchored in Neo-Tocquevillian assumptions. This study examines the impact that the efforts to foment local level participation via a vis municipal government and to build a civic community has had on the development of an autonomous civil society and a subaltern public sphere. Thus, I examine the reorganization of administrative and political space that has taken place over the last twenty years and its impact on grassroots popular organizations through the lens of Foucault's concepts of discipline and panopticism.

This study also examines the impact that the arrival of the central institutions of globalized, neoliberal capitalism (megamarkets and credit instruments) have had on the development of civil society and the public sphere in the post-authoritarian period. The institutions of neoliberal capitalism are reshaping patterns of everyday sociability in popular communities and thus are having a fundamental impact on popular culture. Neoliberal capitalism has contributed to the growing privatization of space in popular communities, which is reshaping the social landscape. This, in turn, is having an impact on political culture and on participation in grassroots organizations.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND THE DILEMMAS OF DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING IN POST-AUTHORITARIAN CHILE

#### **Introduction**

On March 11, 1990 Patricio Aylwin Azocar took office as the elected president of Chile, bringing to an end the long seventeen year dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. Elected in the December 1989 elections that took place largely under rules and parameters determined by the dictatorship, Patricio Aylwin, a lifelong Christian Democrat, and the coalition of center-left parties that supported him (*Concertacion de Partidos Por la Democracia*--Concert of Parties for Democracy) faced several daunting challenges.

Of paramount importance among these was the set of issues that fell under the broad heading of “finishing or completing the transition” by addressing many questions that had been left unresolved during the transition: the question of human rights, civil-military relations, and most important in the long term: the democratization of the authoritarian political institutions that the dictatorship left in place and the creation of spaces for popular participation. Indeed, there was broad agreement within the *concertacion* that the transition to democracy was incomplete, and that many things would have to be changed in order to complete and finish the transition. There was, then, a consensus within the *concertacion* on the need to “deepen democracy” by undoing some of the institutional and social legacies left behind by the dictatorship.

Following the formal transition of power *concertacion* planners faced a difficult task: establishing clear cut differences between the democratic government and the authoritarian past. One of the dominant themes of the *concertacion* during the election campaign was that if the concertacion were elected there would be substantial changes in

terms of the democratization of political institutions. The *concertacion*'s campaign slogan “*La Alegria Ya Viene*” (happiness is coming) in part rested on its underlying rhetoric of democratic change, which suggested that the post-transition politics would represent a significant departure from the authoritarian regime in terms of openness, transparency, accessibility, increased participation and social justice. The campaign rhetoric of the *concertacion* suggested that the institutions of state would be significantly democratized so as to allow for more citizen influence in the process. Indeed, increasing the possibilities for democratic participation and the deepening of democracy (*profundizacion de la democracia*) became two of the dominant themes of *concertacion* discourse during the campaign.

Although there was broad based agreement on the need to “finish the transition” by removing some of the more glaring obstacles to a fuller democracy, within the different parties and tendencies of the *concertacion* there were also significantly different visions surrounding the broader meaning of a project of democratic deepening. These differences were reflected at the grassroots level. However, at the grassroots level, elite democratic discourse was appropriated and transformed to produce different conceptualizations of democracy.

Within the *concertacion*, the democratic imagination coalesced around two distinct poles. Centrist (and more conservative) voices in the coalition adopted a communitarian, neo-Tocquevillian discourse that was centered on encouraging limited local level participation through small community based organizations. Eventually, this neo-Tocquevillian imaginary would become a discourse that would shape relations of power. This sector of the *concertacion*, however, did not envision any major institutional changes that would challenge the core legacies of the dictatorship. Instead, their project called for building on the legacy left behind by Pinochet: this meant continued decentralization, modest social reforms, and implementing a project of state modernization.

A key dimension of this project called for the adoption and implementation of what I call the “neo-Tocquevillian” paradigm<sup>1</sup>--fomenting the development of a network of small grassroots associations that would act at the local level and become the basis for an autonomous civil society. These associations, it was argued, would become spaces for the practice of substantive, participatory democracy. The leadership of the *concertacion* adopted key elements of the “neo-Tocquevillian” paradigm as one of the cornerstones of a project for deepening democracy (*profundizacion de la democracia*) in Chile.

The neo-Tocquevillian paradigm is rooted in the thinking of Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote extensively on American democracy in the 1830s,<sup>2</sup> and whose observations form the intellectual heritage for a set of premises that form the underpinning for attempts to build participatory democracy throughout Latin America. The foundational elements of neo-Tocquevillian thinking are: decentralized government with strong local governments and participation in small, grassroots associations that work primarily through local government.

One of the purposes of this research is to assess the question of whether the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm has served as a vehicle for deepening democracy in Chile. In the post-transition period, however, popular participation and interest in politics has declined and experienced a process of general atrophication. Participation, in short, has become ritualized and no longer constitutes the basis for collective power from below. Indeed, popular participation has become routinized and channeled into arenas where it is of relatively little relevance. This has been one of the unintended outcomes of the effort to deepen democracy and create spaces for popular participation.

To explain this outcome, I turn to the intellectual tradition of another prominent theorist: Michel Foucault. Whereas neo-Tocquevillian theorists look to the local level and

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<sup>1</sup>Warren, Mark 2000. *Democracy and Association* Princeton: Princeton University Press

<sup>2</sup>Tocqueville, Alexis 1988. *Democracy in America* J.P. Mayer (editor) New York: Harper Collins

see social capital, Foucault looked at these same spaces--i.e. the local level--to see complex forms of disciplinary power operating at the microlevel. One of the elements that I wish to explore in this analysis, then, is the connections between social capital and disciplinary power that until now have been inadequately analyzed. Indeed, social capital and discipline are linked in ways that scholars have not examined. One of the central arguments of this study is that a discourse of participation has emerged, one that is dominated by a neo-Tocquevillian logic. When viewed through a Foucaultian prism, "participation" has emerged to become a discourse: an organized field of knowledge in the service of power that organizes the way in which participation is thought of, spoken of, and conceptualized. This discourse is operationalized through social participation, a technique of power and discipline. On this view, local government works--as I shall argue in greater detail in subsequent chapters--in a way that is analogous to Foucault's panopticon--i.e. by enframing and compartmentalizing popular movements into fragmented administrative units.

The practice of social participation, however, has generated unintended consequences: resistance to the conceptualization of participation is manifested through the very associations that were created in the name of social participation. Apathy and exit have also been an unintended consequence of social participation.

These factors demand that we look at the post-transition state. The post-transition state has been instrumental in reorganizing popular civil society (to paraphrase Oxhorn's study). The state has continued to administratively reorganize itself and has created an entire bureaucratic infrastructure to deal with the question of popular participation. These institutions have become the nodal point for organizing participation.

Finally, the arrival of late twentieth century commodity capitalism and the role that it has played in diminishing participation and inducing apathy cannot be ignored. To examine the role that neoliberal capitalism has played, I look at the impact that the arrival of the megamarkets and the malls in popular communities have had on public space and on

popular culture. Neoliberal capitalism has changed the rhythm of life in the *poblaciones* and has contributed to a declining interest in participation by fixing the gaze of residents of the *poblaciones* on the world of commodities.

This study, then, will examine the trials and tribulations of the *concertacion*'s efforts to "complete the transition" and democratize Chile's political institutions and the impact that these processes have had on (1) the organizational structure of popular movements and organizations (2) popular political culture and identity, and (3) patterns and repertoires of popular participation. The questions that will be of central concern to this study are first, the impact that institutional and structural changes in Chile's political institutions (decentralization) have had on the identities and strategies of popular movements and organizations. A second important question is the impact that institutional changes made by the *concertacion* with the objective of "fostering civil society" has had on the structure of social movement networks. Central to this analysis is the relationship between the state (broadly conceived as the central government and municipal governments) and popular movement organizations.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into two broad sections: In the first four chapter (section I) I look at the post-transition state and the role that it has played in reorganizing state-society relations. Chapter 1 examines the state and the dynamics of enframing--the reorganization of public and administrative space that has an impact on popular organizations. Chapter 2 examines social participation as a discourse, that backs a set of power relationships. That is, I argue that "social participation" is a discourse that informs the way in which the state, academic institutions, and many NGOs have come to understand participation. The discourse of social participation has guided the implementation of policies that focus on popular participation. Social participation, I argue, is a vehicle for the normalization of participation. Chapter 3 examines the impact that increased social welfare expenditures have had on popular participation. Increased



spending on social welfare has changed the individual calculus of participation: it has lowered the costs of not participating.

The second section of this study examines the impact that these efforts have had on grassroots organizations and participation. I examine the marginalization, disappearance, and co-optation of the umbrella organizations (CUP, METRO, and MPS) that emerged in the 1980s to mobilize and represent the *pobladores*--i.e. the urban poor--in the transition process. Finally, chapters 6 through 10 constitute a case study of politics in the municipality of Huechuraba. These chapters chart the emergence and decline of a democratic moment in Huechuraba immediately following the transition, when popular organizations appropriated the language of liberal democracy and radicalized the concept of participation and sovereignty in ways that were potentially threatening to the emerging discourse of social participation. I examine the role that the municipality of Huechuraba has played in shaping and redefining the concept of community participation. Finally, I look at the impact that these changes have had on the public sphere--i.e. the subaltern counterpublic--in Huechuraba.

I conclude by examining decentralization and challenges many of the assumptions made by scholars working in the neo-Tocquevillian tradition. Decentralization and the democratization of municipal governments have been touted as the cornerstone of post-transition democratization. Decentralization was seen by *concertacion* policymakers as the primary vehicle for the democratization of the state and for the creation of spaces for popular participation. It also entailed building on the decentralization process begun by the dictatorship. I challenge several of the key findings of the decentralization literature by arguing that decentralization, while bringing government closer to the "people", decentralization also has served to compartmentalize and enframe participation.

### Methods

I spent almost two years in Chile, interviewing leaders of grassroots community organizations, grassroots party leaders, and state and municipal government officials. The

goal of these interviews was to gain insights into the relationship between the neo-Tocquevillian civil society that is slowly emerging in Chile and the institutions that wield political power. Many studies have focused on the grassroots to the exclusion of the broader institutions in which they are embedded, while other studies have focused on the institutions without examining the grassroots. This study attempts to examine the connection between the two spheres.

In the process of carrying out these interviews, I had the opportunity to witness several of the low intensity political conflicts that continuously take place at the local level (and which go largely unnoticed in macrolevel studies) between leaders of grassroots organizations and municipal and state officials. I also had the opportunity to participate in meetings of grassroots party organizations, which revealed insights into the disarticulation of the social and political left that has taken place in post-transition Chile. These conflicts reveal much about the possibilities and parameters of post-transition democracy in Chile.

Finally, I also conducted a large, random sample survey (N=1002) of residents of six low income municipalities (*Pudahuel, Cerro Navia, Lo Espejo, Lo Prado Huechuraba, and Pedro Aguirre Cerda*). These municipalities represent a fairly broad cross section of low income municipalities: they range from among the poorest municipalities in urban Santiago (*Lo Espejo Huechuraba*) to lower middle income municipalities (*Pedro Aguirre Cerda*). The questions asked in this survey covered several issue areas: class relations, state-society relations, democracy, and participation.

## CHAPTER 2

### IMAGINING PARTICIPATION: THE STATE, CITIZENMAKING, AND THE DISCOURSE OF “SOCIAL PARTICIPATION”

#### **Introduction**

One of the intellectual puzzles of the Chilean case is the extent to which the Pinochet dictatorship was able to reach deep into the social fabric of Chile and change the basic underpinnings of Chilean society. In this sense, the Pinochet dictatorship was far more efficient than its counterparts in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. Repression alone, however, does not answer this question: in terms of per capita deaths and physical brutality, the Argentine dictatorship was significantly more repressive than the Chilean dictatorship. The internal cohesiveness of the military as an institution provides a partial answer. Yet, this still does not explain the fundamental transformation of Chilean society--i.e. the depths to which the Pinochet regime was able to reach into the interstices of society.

In this chapter I focus on the role that the state is playing in attempting to transform popular culture in post-authoritarian Chile. The Chilean state has attempted to use state-society relations as a springboard for creating “civic” communities that are anchored in a neo- Tocquevillian imaginary. This process has its earliest beginnings in the dictatorship, when the process of administrative reorganization of the state began and when the regime changed the laws regarding political participation and community organizations. In the post-transition, state bureaucracies, particularly those that deal with social welfare policy, have become deeply concerned with the question of popular participation--i.e. with participation as a vehicle for instilling the proper habits of citizenship. The state’s role is important because it has attempted to define popular participation and establish parameters for the role that grassroots organizations play in

post-transition governance. It is the cultural implications of the state's attempt to define civil society and popular participation and its implications that I wish to examine in this chapter.

In defining the role of popular participation and civil society, however, the state is also involved in a project that goes much deeper than attempting to co-opt organizations and to establish linkages to popular civil society with an eye toward building a support base. Beneath attempts to reestablish linkages to popular civil society is an effort to transform popular culture in ways that alter the dynamics of power. The *concertacion* understood that the structural adjustments of the 1970s and 80s were more than a set of economic policy changes. Structural adjustment has entailed changes in the regime of accumulation and its associated mode of regulation, involving changes at the level of production, investment, labor organization, the role of the state, spatial arrangements, and culture and ideology.<sup>1</sup> What sociologist Eugenio Tironi has called the "neoliberal revolution", then, has been a broad based transition that affects many spheres of social and cultural life.<sup>2</sup> The *concertacion* recognized that integrating the *pasaje* (a physico-cultural space which was seen as essentially incongruent with neoliberalism) into neoliberal economic arrangements would require significant changes at the level of culture. The attempt to transform popular culture in order to make it more compatible with neoliberal capitalism is undergirded by a discourse that I shall call "social participation."

The attempt to define participation, it is important to point out, is resisted in a myriad of ways by popular movements and grassroots organizations, many of whom have come to see the state's attempt to define participation as a subtle form of manipulation and control. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, while the state has been able to impose a

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<sup>1</sup>Harvey, David 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* Oxford: Blackwell

<sup>2</sup>Tironi, Eugenio 1999. *El Regimen Autoritario Para Una Sociologia de Pinochet* Santiago: Ediciones Dolmen

certain kind of order, it has not been able to have its way with popular movements and grassroots organizations. The *pasaje* articulates its own conceptualization of participation, only some of which are consistent with the state's definition. In the municipal offices and state agencies that deal with social problems a low intensity dialectic of cultural struggle unfolds that can easily escape detection when seen from the center, where local microlevel resistance is often missed or overlooked because it does not seem to have an immediate impact on state policy. When viewed from the periphery (from the perspective of the local community development office), however, it is clear that the state's attempt to transform the *pasaje* is a complex process that is not linear and has produced only partial results. It is a process characterized by ongoing tensions and contradictions that are negotiated on a daily basis. Within the administrative and territorial spaces juridically created by the state, a dialectic of resistance, negotiation, and compromise is unfolding that is largely invisible from the center. What seems to be emerging from this dialectical struggle between the state and the *pasaje* is a complex and uneven synthesis.

### **The State, Civil Society, and Participation**

For the moment, however, I wish to set aside the fragmented and complex struggles that unfold on the margins of society to examine "participation" and "civil society" as it is viewed from the center (i.e. the state) in order to flesh out its premises, objectives, and policies. The state's attempt to fix the parameters of popular participation can be understood through the prism of Foucault's concept of governmentality:

To govern a state will mean, therefore, to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising toward its inhabitants...a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household goods.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Foucault, Michel 1979. "Governmentality" *Ideology and Consciousness* 3,

Governmentality is the “correct way of managing individuals, goods, and wealth.”<sup>4</sup> As operationalized by the state and municipalities, civil society and participation can also be viewed as a strategy for surveillance and as a technique of discipline. By encouraging it, by defining it, and by interacting with its participants, the state oversees civil society and participation, with the goal of (1) making the *pasaje* more penetrable and legible and (2) using participation as a vehicle for an attempt socially and culturally transform the *pasaje*. Governmentality, then, focuses on the infrastructural capacities of the state: its capacity to penetrate society and act as an agent of change.<sup>5</sup>

It is also important to flesh out what could be called the “grand strategy” of the state vis a vis the question of developing civil society and fomenting participation because it is under (and against) the broad umbrella of this grand strategy and its accompanying discursive framework that popular struggle and resistance unfolds.

States are important actors that exert an influence over patterns and modes of popular participation, and have had a crucial role in shaping (1) how social conflict is organized, (2) the terms on which conflict unfolds, and (3) the repertoires of collective action through which social conflict manifests itself. The state is an important factor of cohesion in a given social formation. Studies of the state have suggested that the state plays an important role in organizing the broad parameters of civil society. The starting point for understanding the role played by the state vis a vis civil society is provided by Skocpol:

States matter because their organizational configurations, along with their overall patterns of activity, affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formation and collective political actions (but not others) and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Mann, Michael 1993. *The Sources of Social Power Volume II*. Cambridge University Press

<sup>6</sup> Skocpol, Theda 1985. “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research” *Bringing The State Back In*. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.) Cambridge University Press p.21

The point is that the state is important because it strongly shapes the broader pattern of governance. Somewhat paradoxically, the leaner states of the neoliberal era may be doing more to subtly shape societal forces than their *dirigiste* predecessors. As one scholar who has examined the role of the post-transition neoliberal state puts it:

Under the guise of limited intervention or non-intervention, an aspect of the dominant neoliberal discourse with its commitment to a market-driven model of development, states are intervening in important ways that have significant cultural effects. States, in other words, are at the center of the present modernizing project, the so-called neo-liberal project.<sup>7</sup>

Although the neoliberal state may be less directly involved in production, it has more resources at its disposal than its populist predecessor. It can use these resources to more effectively intervene in specific areas. In the post-transition, the Chilean state has shaped patterns of participation, not by taking dramatic transformative actions, but by governing from within the structures that were inherited from the dictatorship, and by building linkages to popular civil society. This has influenced popular participation in several ways:

(1) First, the state has an important role in shaping the general parameters of participation: "The state has an important voice in how political participation will be defined. All regimes, whether authoritarian or civilian, define what sorts of participatory activities can take place."<sup>8</sup> The state has an impact on the shape of civil society--on the way in which interests are organized. Laws concerning associational life that the state enacts have an effect on the ways in which people organize. The administrative lines and boundaries that the state draws within itself, within society--which are a reflection of the way in which the state imagines society, and between the state and society, can have important consequences for the development of civil society and for popular participation.

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<sup>7</sup>Schild, Veronica 1998 "New Subjects of Rights? Women's Movements and the Construction of Citizenship in the New Democracies" *Cultures of Politics Politics of Cultures Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements* Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (eds.) Boulder: Westview Press

<sup>8</sup>Dietz, Henry 1998. *Urban Poverty, Political Participation, and the State* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press p.29

(2) Secondly, from a rational choice perspective, the state influences the individual calculus of participation in a myriad of ways (i.e. the assessment of the costs and benefits of participation that people make). By shaping the forms of participation that can take place--thus indirectly influencing the range of possible outcomes of social conflicts *ex ante*--the state plays a role in shaping the individual calculus of participation. Structures that generate atomization and fragmentation, for example, can influence the calculus of participation by helping to foster (intentionally or unintentionally) the perception that associations are powerless to change policy in any substantive way. In short, the state's structures and actions influence the value that people place on participation as a way of articulating and ameliorating grievances.

(3) Finally, and most importantly, the liberal bourgeois state--as Gramsci observed-- often can assume the role of educator:

In reality, the State must be conceived of as an "educator", in as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation. The State, in this field, too, is an instrument of rationalisation, or acceleration, and of Taylorisation.<sup>9</sup>

This can be seen most clearly in the role that the state has played in public education. It can also be seen in the effort to shape and mold patterns of citizen association and participation. One of the most important dimensions of power, as one scholar has observed, is "the power to create the contexts of public life itself."<sup>10</sup> The state, then, has been central in the struggle over the meaning of civil society. One of the most important struggles between the state and society has been the struggle over civil society itself: not only is civil society a space for contestation, the very understanding of what "civil society" is itself becomes a terrain of conflict:

Competing conceptions of civil society are deployed in a continual struggle to maintain cultural hegemony by dominant groups or to attain counter-

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<sup>9</sup>Gramsci, Antonio 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International p.247

<sup>10</sup>Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*. Cambridge University Press p.17



hegemony on the part of subordinate collective actors. No conception of civil society is neutral. Each is part of a project to shape the social relations, cultural forms, and modes of thought in society.<sup>11</sup>

The state, in short, has an important role in defining the meaning of civil society.

Routine relations between the state and citizens in dispersed and localized sites (local welfare offices, community development departments in municipalities, meetings in local offices of different ministries, etc.) create multiple spaces for interaction and dialogue that can be important in the forging of what one scholar has called “civic etiquette.”<sup>12</sup> A civic etiquette is that set of informal rules and norms that underpin and inform the way in which people speak about and frame issues on the public stage. In short, it is the set of rules and norms that give form and substance to behavior in civil society and the public sphere. Ordinary exchanges between grassroots associations, ordinary citizens, and state officials (social workers, bureaucrats, elected officials) can significantly shape the way in which issues are spoken about publicly, and the way in which people organize and act collectively. More broadly, then, these interactions have an impact on modalities of participation.

Everyday interactions between the state and civil society can become forums where the state engages in a subtle form of moral regulation--the process of “normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted...what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular historical form of social order.”<sup>13</sup> Moral regulation occurs in the context of the almost daily interactions between municipal/state officials and community leaders. In this case, state actors are engaged in an attempt to naturalize and universalize the neoliberal order--to make it appear natural--and by extension to make alternatives appear unrealistic. Concomitantly, they are also attempting to universalize certain forms

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<sup>11</sup> Cohen, Jean 1999. “Trust, Voluntary Association, and Workable Democracy: The Contemporary American Discourse of Civil Society” *Democracy and Trust* Mark E. Warren (editor) Cambridge University Press p.214

<sup>12</sup> Eliasoph, 1998 op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Corrigan, Philip and Derek Sayer 1985. *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* Oxford p.4

of citizen participation (participation that is congruent with neoliberal capitalism), while making other modes appear unrealistic. While the basic outlines and parameters of this project have been developed in the upper echelons of the state, its actual implementation takes place in dispersed and localized sites: the local health care clinic, the municipal community development office, the local social welfare office, the office of the mayor and municipal council representatives, the Union of Neighborhood Councils office.

Routine encounters between the state and citizens that for the most part take place in dispersed, localized spaces on the periphery of society, then, can be sites for attempting to build a specific form of habitus<sup>14</sup>--a habitus of citizenship. A habitus of citizenship can be thought of as a durable, routinized cluster of associational patterns and patterns of sociability, modes of organization and participation, forms of interaction and dialogue vis a vis the state, and frameworks for discussing, understanding, and framing issues (civic etiquette) that eventually comes to function almost unconsciously, and that sustains and legitimizes the status quo, not by eliciting conscious support for the hegemonic order, but by naturalizing the dominant order. The habitus of citizenship, then, is the cultural milieu in which activities pertaining to the exercise of citizenship (participation, association, deliberation, dialogue) takes place. Unlike Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, which is generated through early socialization, the creation of this particular habitus is attempted through techniques of discipline identified by Foucault<sup>15</sup>: the reorganization of physical space, administrative structures, and individuals, and the regulation of activities through training processes. The attempt to mold a habitus of citizenship, then, entails the routinization of specific modes and practices of citizenship through techniques of discipline. As we shall see, however, this process has generated unintended outcomes, and is in many cases resisted in different ways.

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<sup>14</sup>Bourdieu, Pierre 1995. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press

<sup>15</sup>Foucault, Michel 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Press

## Enframing

One way of understanding the impact that the state has in the struggle over the meaning of civil society and in forging a habitus of citizenship is through the analytical prism of “enframing.” Mitchell builds on Foucault’s insights into the dynamics of power to develop the concept of enframing in order to understand how the reorganization of public (and private) spaces (cities, rural villages, military institutions, schools) was instrumental in the restructuring of power--i.e. in more evenly diffusing power and authority over the whole surface of a society. For Mitchell, the reorganization of physical (and mental) space is a critical factor in the transition from pre-capitalist forms of power, centralized around a sovereign and unevenly diffused, to the disciplinary power of modern capitalist orders, where power is evenly diffused across society and internalized.

Enframing, as Mitchell tells us, is a method of “dividing and containing...which operates by conjuring up a neutral surface called space.”<sup>16</sup> It is also a technique of order and a strategy of containment that represents a new mode of authority that works by creating the appearance of structure: such techniques, Mitchell argues, “all work to create the appearance of a structure, a framework that seems to exist apart from, and prior to, the particular individuals or actions it enframes.”<sup>17</sup> One of the effects of enframing is to create a “new kind of political discipline among the population”, and to make these new forms of power more unnoticed. This new political discipline was required, in Mitchell’s case, by the exigencies of the colonial project. In the Chilean context, a new kind of political discipline was required by the exigencies of a neoliberal economic system that transformed the relationship between the state, the economy, and society.

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<sup>16</sup>Mitchell, Timothy 1988. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press p46. Mitchell develops the concept of enframing to discuss the reorganization of Egyptian society during the period of French colonial domination. However, he focuses on physical reorganization. I focus on administrative and legal reorganization as an attempt to compartmentalize and contain popular movements.

<sup>17</sup>ibid. p.14

The concept of enframing sheds light on the role that the state has played in the organization and administration of associational life. Enframing suggests that we analyze the reorganization of administrative space (seen in policies such as decentralization and the reorganization of structures that deal with social policy) and associational life as a strategy for exercising a subtle form of regulation over popular participation and for the creation of disciplined modes of citizenship. Regulation in this context must be understood not as a form of exclusion and repression, but instead must be viewed in the context of inclusion and integration: regulation works through surveillance and the utilization of techniques that Foucault<sup>18</sup> identified as “discipline” to extract time and commitments from citizens.

Enframing works partly by reorganizing political administrative space and partly by opening up and making accessible that which has previously been hidden. The state administratively enframes popular movements in a myriad of ways. Decentralization, internal administrative reorganization, and the creation of new state agencies to deal with different sectors of the population are a way of organizing the institutional and territorial spaces in which citizens and groups participate. Some of these have a specific territorial/spatial component: the creation of new municipalities and the internal redrawing of areas of responsibility between municipalities and the central government create specific spatially defined and organized administrative spaces within which citizens and associations participate.

One of the effects of decentralization--as we shall see--has been to “enframe” popular movements and organizations within the context of a particular administrative space: the local, territorially defined, administrative space of the municipality. Decentralization has been a vehicle for the compartmentalization and fragmentation of popular movements and organizations by creating specific administrative spaces within which associations and organizations participate. Internal administrative divisions of the

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<sup>18</sup>Foucault, 1977 op. cit.

state and the compartmentalization of space that this represents creates a certain representation of reality, a new mode of authority, and new hierarchies that have an impact on the way in which civil society is organized.

The creation of an array of institutions and administrative agencies to deal with specific issues (women, environment, indigenous affairs, youth, senior citizens, etc.) can be seen as a method of reorganizing policy and administrative space that can influence the way in which citizens organize (some types of associations are encouraged by a particular ensemble of institutions, while others are discouraged). The internal divisions within administrative state structures, in short, have an impact on social movement organizations by influencing the process of articulation--i.e. the process of building linkages among different elements within the movement. Thus, state structures influence strategies of collective organization, action, and resistance.<sup>19</sup> From the perspective of the *pasaje*, the internal administrative labyrinths of the state can appear to constitute a formidable set of obstacles.

### **The Problematicization of Civil Society and Citizen Participation**

In a cogent examination of the state, Bourdieu has written that "state bureaucracies and their representatives are great producers of social problems that social science does little more than ratify whenever it takes them over as sociological problems."<sup>20</sup> In Chile, state ministries and agencies have come to view the questions of civil society and participation (i.e. the role played by the citizen in public affairs) as one such "social problem." In combination with academic institutions and think tanks (as well as international institutions--IGOs and INGOs), the questions of civil society and participation have come to be understood through the prism of a discourse that I call

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<sup>19</sup>Tarrow, Sidney 1998. Power in Movement Social Movements and Contentious Politics Cambridge University Press

<sup>20</sup>Bourdieu, Pierre 1999. "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field" State/Culture State-Formation after the Cultural Turn George Steinmetz (editor) Cornell University Press

social participation. Circumscribed within the discourse of social participation is the dilemma of building a viable civil society and a participatory (but stable) democracy. Social participation, then, is problematized participation: participation that is extensively researched, managed, observed, and regulated. The problem of popular participation has been the object of extensive intellectual analysis and policymaking activity in the post-transition period. Indeed, since the end of the transition, a great deal of attention has been paid to the question of civil society and its corollary issue--“participation.” Participation is increasingly being subsumed under the umbrella of “science” through attempts to rationalize, normalize, and technocratize participation. The post-authoritarian state has hired sociologists, anthropologists, economists, political scientists, and other professionals and organizations to focus on and analyze the question of “*la participacion*.” In short, participation has emerged as a distinct field of research in the post-transition.

The broad contours of the *concertacion*'s political project are subsumed under the term “Growth With Equity” (*Crecimiento con Equidad*), which encompasses a set of economic and social policies centered around two primary objectives: (1) increased spending on social welfare programs to address the social debt (*deuda social*) that had accumulated under the dictatorship. (2) Second, and more important for the purposes here has been to build civil society and to foment increased popular participation. In short, post-transition democratization has been focused on the areas of social citizenship rights and participation rights of citizenship.

The emphasis that has been placed on the question of popular participation in the *concertacion*'s policies can be seen in the creation of a state ministry designed to focus directly on the question of state relations with actors in society: the *Ministerio Secretaria General de Gobierno* (MINSEGOB), which has been given responsibility for restructuring the channels of communication between the state and civil society. MINSEGOB has been charged with responsibility for generating a “new politics of

citizen participation” by creating a mechanism for an “ongoing articulation between the state and civil society.”<sup>21</sup> In effect, MINSEGOB is the peak state agency charged with developing new modalities of civic participation and channels of communication between state and society.

Within MINSEGOB, the Division of Social Organizations (*Division de Organizaciones Sociales*--DOS) was also established. The DOS replaces the Division of Civil Organizations (*Division de Organizaciones Civiles*--DOC) that was created during the dictatorship to oversee community organizations. The DOS is charged with adopting policies to strengthen civil society, with providing an intermediary between the state and civil society, and to create conditions to foster participation. DOS has also been instrumental in creating spaces for carrying on a permanent, ongoing dialogue between the state and popular organizations, which have become known as “citizen dialogues” (*dialogos ciudadanos*).<sup>22</sup> In short, a central component of *concertacion* policy has been to attempt to reorganize those sectors of the state that are central to state-society relations and to build linkages to civil society.

Participation and the space in which participation unfolds--civil society--became problematized and organized as a policy field and conceptualized as a social science problem in earnest, however, in the early 1990s, when the *concertacion* made building a viable civil society a centerpiece of post-transition democratization. In mid-1991, the Aylwin government created a “coordination group” (*grupo de coordinacion*) that was assigned the task of developing a coherent policy to address the issue of popular participation.<sup>23</sup> This group was comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Planning (MIDEPLAN), the National Solidarity Fund (FOSIS), the Ministry of the Interior, and the

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<sup>21</sup> Ministerio Secretaria General de Gobierno 1995. *Mensaje Presidencial* Mayo

<sup>22</sup> Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1998. *Memoria Anual*

<sup>23</sup> Ministerio de Planificacion y Cooperacion 1992. *Participacion de la Comunidad en el Desarrollo Social Logros y Proyecciones* Santiago: MIDEPLAN

Ministry of the General Secretary of the Government (DOS), who were given the task of coming up with a definition of participation that would form the basis for the *concertacion*'s policies. This coordination group defined participation as the "incorporation of beneficiaries of social programs into the decisions made by these programs." That is, those who were the recipients of the targeted social programs of the neoliberal era were to be incorporated into the policymaking process.

Participation emerged to become a social problem for several reasons. The primary reason is that transitions to democracy inevitably bring up a host of dilemmas that are associated with citizen participation: how to foment and encourage it, how to carry on a dialogue between state and society, and--from the perspective of the state--*how to control it*. Increasing popular participation was seen by leaders of the *concertacion* as essential to the process of democratic consolidation and legitimation. This theme pervades the policy statements and speeches made by *concertacion* elites. "In the realm of consolidating and perfecting democracy, participation is understood as an indispensable requirement that is complementary to the process deconcentration and decentralization."<sup>24</sup>

Second, social participation was seen as instrumental to the realm of social justice: in the neoliberal era, organizations in civil society were viewed as having the potential to take up many of the responsibilities that the state had abandoned. The third sector of civil society--networks of NGOs, public non-state organizations and agencies, and grassroots community and volunteer associations--were seen as picking up the slack left behind by a leaner state. Civil society, then, was seen as a vehicle for a third way to social democracy in an era when the welfare state was being dismantled, and when business elites were endowed with the capacity to resist any efforts to expand the role of the state.<sup>25</sup> The third sector would (1) become a partner to the state in executing development programs in low

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<sup>24</sup>ibid. p.29

<sup>25</sup>Giddens, Anthony 1998. *The Third Way The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press



income communities, and (2) act as agent of state reform.<sup>26</sup> Structural adjustment, then, has entailed creating a new space for state-society relations.

Third, participation has been viewed as a vehicle for the social and cultural transformation of the *pasaje*. The objective has been to build civic communities and foster the development of a civic culture in the *pasaje*. In the wake of the transition to democracy the dilemma has been one of how to create spaces for popular participation that can act as the vehicle for transforming popular culture (i.e. referred to as “social development”) without overwhelming or destabilizing the existing democracy.

### **Developmental Democracy: the Neo-Tocquevillian Paradigm**

The basic premises of the model of social participation that has provided the underpinning for *concertacion* policy are rooted in a set of assumptions that view appropriate forms of participation as conducive to the development of positive qualities of citizenship. Social participation is anchored in a reading of democracy that Macpherson once called “developmental democracy.”<sup>27</sup> The roots of developmental democracy are found in the dilemmas posed by the emergence of the working class in England in the nineteenth century and the dilemma of how to enfranchise workers without undermining the status quo.

The answer to the dilemma: use democracy and participation as a vehicle for self-improvement. Central to developmental democracy, then, is an understanding of the role that participation can play as a vehicle for individual self-development and improvement.<sup>28</sup> In this case individual self-development through participation in associational life is seen as leading to the inculcation of the virtues of citizenship--i.e. to

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<sup>26</sup>Fisher, Julie 1993. The Road from Rio Sustainable Development and the Nongovernmental Movement in the Third World Westport: Praeger Bresser, Luis Carlos and Grau, Nuria 1998. Lo Publico No-Estatal en la Reforma del Estado Buenos Aires: CLAD

<sup>27</sup>Macpherson, C.B. 1977. The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy Oxford University Press

<sup>28</sup>ibid. Tocqueville also argued that democracy demanded specific attitudes. These attitudes could be fostered by participation.

the development of a civic culture along the lines of Almond and Verba's seminal work, where measured participation is counterbalanced by passivity and obedience.<sup>29</sup> Almond and Verba's "civic culture", along with Putnam's<sup>30</sup> work on social capital have provided the intellectual foundations for developing a model for social participation. Putnam's core thesis, intellectually grounded in Tocqueville's<sup>31</sup> observations on democracy, is central to understanding developmental democracy and the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm that is its foundation:

Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors. Moreover, when individuals belong to cross-cutting groups with diverse goals and members, their attitudes will tend to moderate as a result of group interaction and cross-pressures...In a civic community associations of like minded equals contribute to effective democratic governance.<sup>32</sup>

The neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, then, posits that certain specific modes of participation are complementary and beneficial to democratic governance: small, decentralized, grassroots "civic" associations--that are not necessarily political--serve to make democracy work (to paraphrase Putnam's influential work) by developing skills of cooperation, trust, and moderation.

Indeed, Tocqueville argued that associations and local governments were schools of democracy, where people learn the art of citizenship.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, however, he warned that "unlimited freedom of association for political ends is, of all forms of liberty, the last that a nation can sustain."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, for participation to be beneficial, it must occur in a context where "differences of view are only matters of nuance..."<sup>35</sup> Such an understanding of participation--as a form of civic education that narrows differences

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<sup>29</sup> Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba 1995. The Civic Culture Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations Newbury Park: Sage

<sup>30</sup> Putnam, 1993 op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> Tocqueville, Alexis 1988. Democracy in America J.P. Mayer (ed.) New York: Harper Collins

<sup>32</sup> Putnam, 1993 op.cit. p.93

<sup>33</sup> Tocqueville, 1988 op.cit.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* p.193

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* p.194

and teaches a common idiom of citizenship--suggests that the line between participation as a vehicle for empowering citizens and as a technique of disciplining citizens in support of an existing power configuration is thin indeed.

Following a Tocquevillian logic, promoting “civic virtues” and moderation has been central in the *concertacion*’s understanding of participation because such virtues are seen as facilitating governance and generating stability. As a study of popular participation by the *Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo* (CED), a policy center closely associated with and influential within the *concertacion*, recently put it: “When the citizens do not possess civic virtues, democracies become difficult to govern and can even become unstable.”<sup>36</sup> One of the fundamental tasks of post-transition governments, the report argues, is to build civic communities and cultures. Popular culture--i.e. the culture of the *pasaje*--is imagined as a culture that is largely lacking in civic virtues: the *pobladores* (urban poor) are seen as excessively dependent and easily led astray. Indeed, the citizenship deficit that is seen as a vexing attribute of popular culture can be seen largely in terms of a dearth of civic virtues. Thus, the proponents of social participation argue that mechanisms must be found to inculcate civic virtues and build a civic culture.

One of the central theses that undergirds developmental democracy, then, is that when properly implemented, participation can be a vehicle for self-improvement. Through the self-improvement that occurs as a result of participation in grassroots associations, people will become more willing to participate according to established rules and procedures and to become “civic-minded” citizens who are far less likely to take to the streets and create disorder. Social participation, then, becomes a civilizing agent that tames the darker passions and instincts of the *pasaje*.

Second, social participation is seen as a way of tapping the potential of citizens in ways that bolster the dominant (i.e. neoliberal, capitalist) project. Social participation is

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<sup>36</sup>Centro de Estudios Para el Desarrollo 1999. “La Participacion Emergente” Santiago: CED p.13

also understood by intellectuals and policymakers as the basis for the formation of self-reliant citizens, which is seen as one of the cultural requisites of social and economic development in a neoliberal environment. Instead of a space within which to challenge neoliberal capitalist arrangements, on this reading civil society is a sphere that is useful for deepening capitalism by depoliticizing capitalist social relations of production. What Marx identified as a specifically political question in *Grundrisse*--the often coercive juridical and social relations that sustain capitalism--becomes naturalized and universalized. This naturalization can be seen in the following statement, made to me by a disheveled man who was sitting on a box by a garbage ditch, waiting for his son to recover some items from the garbage ditch: "I voted for Lavin<sup>37</sup> because he favors businessmen, and only the rich can invest and create work for people like me." The subaltern classes, in short, depend on the investments made by business.

Thus, one of the dilemmas created by this reading of civil society is that it can become a space for deepening the social and cultural mechanisms that sustain a capitalist mode of production, which can strip civil society of much of its democratizing edge.

More broadly stated, certain discourses on civil society can tend to

conceptualize away the problem of capitalism, by disaggregating society into fragments, with no overarching power structure, no totalizing unity, no systemic coercions--in other words, no capitalist system, with its expansionary drive and its capacity to penetrate every aspect of social life.<sup>38</sup>

Such understandings of civil society, then, weaken resistance to the coercions of capitalism. Civil society, on this view, can also serve as the basis for severing the political from the economic and the social, thus obscuring the fundamental dynamics of the broader system by making them appear immutable, and not open to discussion. By enframing participation within the localized and territorially fragmented space of the municipality, an

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<sup>37</sup>In the 1999 presidential elections, Lavin was the candidate favored by business interests, the military, and the Pinochetista right.

<sup>38</sup>Meiksins Wood, Ellen 1995. *Democracy Against Capitalism Renewing Historical Materialism* Cambridge University Press p.245

appearance of complexity, fragmentation, and vastness is created that has the effect of disarticulating participation from engaging the overarching capitalist system as a problem. In this context, the capitalist system is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The totalizing logic of capitalism becomes part of an immutable reality: ever present, yet invisible.

Hidden beneath its seemingly “apolitical”, neutral, and fragmented character, then, are the faint, but unmistakable, footprints of a hegemonic political project with a light touch. At its core is barren politics of anti-politics where participation becomes a vehicle for producing citizens functional to neoliberal capitalism and for ensuring continued quiescence and stability. The great irony is that on this view participation leads not to a greater role for the citizen in government, but quite the opposite, to a declining role for citizens in government. Participation becomes a vehicle for enacting the policies that have been formulated in the insulated spaces in the upper echelons of the state. Indeed, the third sector’s role has been to help in the implementation phase of policy formulation, not in the legislation phase. Citizen participation, then, creates a space that can deepen hegemony while ostensibly deepening democracy.

### **Diagnosing the *Pasaje*: The Citizenship Deficit**

The bases for understanding and conceptualizing the problem of participation stem from a diagnosis of the *pasaje* that bears some similarities and points of convergence with the diagnosis that was made during the dictatorship. This reading of the *pasaje* has deep historical roots as well: it is linked to a narrative with a long historical trajectory whose origins can be found as early as the 17th century when the poor and the vagabonds that roamed the countryside in Chile were defined as “potential delinquents.”<sup>39</sup> These basic narratives and texts continue to haunt the subtext of contemporary discourse.

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<sup>39</sup>Salazar, Gabriel 1995. *Labradores, Peones y Proletarios*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones

Intellectuals who supported the dictatorship argued that democracy could not work in Chile, in large measure because the culture appropriate to democracy was lacking.<sup>40</sup> The *pasaje* was viewed by those who supported the dictatorship as lacking the cultural attributes necessary for democracy to work (the authoritarian enclaves found in the 1980 constitution can be seen as artificial props to make up for this lack of a civic culture). Jaime Guzman, one of the intellectual forces behind the dictatorship, borrowed from Lipset's thesis concerning the relationship between affluence and democracy, to argue that the underprivileged, who often constitute a majority in developing societies, would be easily convinced to vote for left wing parties (communists, socialists), which in turn would inevitably result in the destruction of democracy.<sup>41</sup> Thus, democracy in situations of underdevelopment required institutional and juridical props that would take into account the propensity of the underprivileged to vote for the left:

If our adversaries should ever gain power, they should find themselves so constrained that they will have little choice but to take actions that do not significantly differ from what we would want because the range of options imposed by the weight of institutions gives them no other alternative.<sup>42</sup>

The subtext to this argument, of course, is that the poor and the working class--the *pasaje*--are the unwitting accomplices of communist lies and promises and that they will inevitably use the mechanisms available through democracy to steal from hardworking citizens (i.e. the underlying narrative of the "potential delinquency" of the subaltern classes is expanded to apply to the political realm, where the popular classes are viewed as, in effect, political delinquents who bilk the dominant classes *en masse* of their hard earned position in a systematic way).<sup>43</sup> As a wealthy businessman, who was an ardent supporter

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<sup>40</sup>Guzman, Jaime "El Camino Político" *El Mercurio* December 26, 1981 p.c5-c6

<sup>41</sup>*ibid.* The reason that democracy would be destroyed, however, is that the bourgeoisie would be forced to take measures to restore order.

<sup>42</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Oddly enough, the systematic robbery that is a fear of dominant elites is a trait that was learned from dominant elites, who have used the state in their own way to plunder the subaltern classes and build their positions of privilege.

of the dictatorship, put it to me in a conversation when I asked him about the many “authoritarian enclaves”<sup>44</sup> left behind by the dictatorship: “*Al roto hay que tenerle la pata encima, si no se aprovecha.*” (It is necessary to keep the *roto*<sup>45</sup> under control because if not he/she will take advantage.) The authoritarian enclaves left behind by the dictatorship, in short, are a way to make the system “*roto*” proof, i.e. to compensate for the delinquent impulse that continues to lurk in the *pasajes* of Santiago’s *poblaciones*.

In ways that have some congruencies with the dictatorship that preceded it, the *concertacion* views the question of popular participation as a public policy problem that requires the attention of policymakers and intellectuals. The diagnosis of the problems associated with “*lo popular*” (i.e. popular culture) made by the *concertacion* is somewhat analogous--albeit more sophisticated--to that made by the Pinochet dictatorship: policymakers within the *concertacion*, particularly those who are focused on the issues of poverty and development, see popular culture as something in need of transformation and modernization. As one municipal bureaucrat characterized the process of modernizing popular culture:

We have to make them more independent, so that they can manage their own affairs and not depend on the state to do things for them. They are used to having the state give them things, and that has to be changed. We have to change the culture and teach them to be responsible for themselves.<sup>46</sup>

The director of community development--the office in charge of citizen participation--in the municipality of Lo Prado argued that “they (i.e. the residents of Lo Prado) still don’t know how to participate, this is something they must learn...they don’t know how to organize, and how to work with the municipality.”<sup>47</sup> Internal documents of the DOS and

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<sup>44</sup>Garreton, Manuel Antonio 1995. *Hacia Una Nueva Era Politica Estudio Sobre las Democratizaciones* Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Economica

<sup>45</sup>*Roto* is a derogatory term that is used to refer to the lower classes.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with the director of the Department of Community Development in the Municipality of Pudahuel, October 1999

<sup>47</sup>Interview with the director of Department of Community Development Municipality of Lo Prado, January, 2000

other government agencies also reveal that popular culture is viewed by policymakers as in need of modernization to make it more compatible with neoliberal capitalist society.

Like the dictatorship, *concertacion* intellectuals and policymakers, have been vexed by a persistent “citizenship deficit” (*deficit ciudadano*) within popular civil society that must be remedied and overcome as part of the process of modernization.<sup>48</sup> The existence of this citizenship deficit is underscored by data that is read to suggest that popular culture shows a “lack of legitimation and institutionalization of habits of citizenship.”<sup>49</sup> What is lacking, in short, is an appropriate civic etiquette and political culture. This reading of popular culture as lacking in the attributes needed to be effective citizens has permeated down to the lower echelons of the state and into the municipalities. As the director of the Department of Community Development in the municipality of Lo Espejo, when asked about popular participation in the municipality, put it:

They don't know how to participate...they come in here expecting the municipality to solve their problems, and when we tell them they can't they get angry. They expect everything to be handed to them. What is missing is more of a civilized culture.<sup>50</sup>

The view that the popular sectors “expect everything to be handed to them” reflects a particular imaginary of the *pasaje* that has been very durable and has persisted across different eras. The idea that *poblador* culture expects everything handed to them, moreover, has also been internalized within the popular sectors: a persistent theme in my interviews with organizational leaders was the lack of initiative on the part of the *pobladores*. A common expression among organizational leaders, when asked about the lack of participation, was “*a la gente le gusta que se les de todo en bandeja de oro.*” (People expect everything handed to them on a golden platter). In short, they are lazy and unwilling to work to better themselves.

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<sup>48</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1999. *Ciudadanía en Chile El Desafío Cultural del Nuevo Milenio*

<sup>49</sup>ibid. p.16

<sup>50</sup>Interview with the director of community development in the municipality of Lo Espejo June, 2000



The rhetoric of the “absence of culture” was a central theme among social workers in the municipalities. Many municipal officials who dealt with community organizations saw their task in terms of “managing participation” and in terms of attempting to change popular culture, in short, to teach them how to participate appropriately. When asked about his role in the municipality, the Director of Community Development put it this way: “Our role is to guide and advise the *dirigentes* (organizational leaders) and to help them to learn how to be better *dirigentes*. We help them with petitions and project proposals, with organizing meetings, and with running their organizations.”<sup>51</sup>

He then went on to point out that many leaders did not have the culture and skills needed to participate effectively. Too, popular culture and identity are seen in many ways as incompatible with a modern capitalist economy: popular culture is seen as excessively dependent on the paternalist state for solutions to problems. These problems are attributed to a variety of sources that have their roots in long term patterns of economic and social development.

Indicators of this lack of civility and citizenship are found in surveys and polls which show that substantial majorities believe that work is not a key to success, that there is no equality under the law, that substantial percentages of people are willing to break the law in pursuit of gain, and that there is lack of trust and cooperation in society.<sup>52</sup> These are seen as pernicious cultural traits that are associated with *pasaje* culture and that must be changed in order to make democracy work as it is supposed to work.

The task, as the article goes on to argue, should be to “install citizenship.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, according to state policymakers, people must come to perceive that there is equality under the law, that the law must be habitually and reflexively obeyed, and that hard work does lead to success in life. In short, a common set of values--an ethic--must come be shared

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<sup>51</sup>Interview with the Director of Community Development Municipality of Lo Espejo March, 1998

<sup>52</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1999, op.cit. p.15

<sup>53</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1999, op.cit. p.19

by society as a whole. The objective, then, must be to find mechanisms in order to “instill citizenship at the level of culture through a process of social construction.”<sup>54</sup> Citizenship, as the preceding statement suggests, is constructed through a process of cultural transformation and social construction. Indicators of citizenship that are used are measures of interpersonal trust, satisfaction with government, and norms of reciprocity--in short, the indicators of the presence or absence of social capital that have become the yardstick for measuring the success of the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm.

Social participation is viewed as one vehicle for remedying the citizenship deficit, which is ultimately seen in terms of a “modernity deficit,” where traditional popular sector culture and identity are seen as broadly inconsistent with modern notions of citizenship.<sup>55</sup> The associations and organizations that are associated with social participation are seen as providing an incubator or a cocoon for the metamorphosis of the *pasaje* and the creation of citizens. Popular participation, however, is fraught with potential dangers and pitfalls: the danger of destabilization, of taking the lid off a pressure cooker and unleashing an uncontrolled chain reaction. The dilemma, then, is how to foster participation without undermining and destabilizing democracy. It is this tension between increasing participation and destabilizing democracy that has been at the center of much investigation.

Thus, since the transition, participation has emerged as a social problem that is to be studied, probed, researched and examined. An array of state and academic institutions, along with NGOS and policy studies centers, have become concerned with the problem of participation. There are specific methodologies and approaches that are used to analyze participation--and that find their way into policy decisions-- and the impact that it is having on popular culture. Indicators that participation has emerged as an object and

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<sup>54</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales, 1999. op. cit. p.19

<sup>55</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales, 1999. op. cit. p.15

distinct field of study and analysis--i.e. as a discourse (as well as state regulation and control)--can be seen, for example, in the creation of government journals that deal with topics that are centered around the question of participation. The Division of Social Organizations (*Division de Organizaciones Sociales*) publishes "*Temas de Participacion*" (Themes of Participation-- ToP) and *Zona Publica* (Public Zone), bi-monthly journals that focus on issues and questions of participation and the management of social conflict. These agencies also conduct many studies that focus on participation. Indeed, DOS has a library that houses its studies.

ToP provides a forum where policymakers and academics can debate issues concerning participation: how to make it more effective, how to shape it, how to foment it, etc. *Zona Publica* is a journal that focuses on the different dimensions of state-society relations from the perspective of the state's efforts to work with citizens and create a dialogue with civil society; in short, with how to make public administration more effective and to more effectively manage and cope with the demands of the citizens while staying within the parameters of the status quo. A look at the articles contained in this publication suggests that the state has adopted a social scientific approach to understanding popular participation.

An integrated institutional infrastructure has emerged to deal with the question of participation: state ministries and agencies, NGOs, universities, think tanks, and municipal departments of community development. DOS works closely with other academic institutions and policy centers: FLACSO, Participa, SUR, and Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo to name a few. Through MINSEGOB, DOS, and ministries that are concerned with social policy, the state also provides substantial funding to academic institutions, think tanks, and NGOs to conduct studies that are focused on issues concerned with participation. These organizations conduct seminars for policymakers on their findings and on their research. A wide array of state and municipal policymakers and bureaucrats, intellectuals, and associational leaders attend these seminars. An extensive

array of state and non-state actors, then, have been involved in shaping what could be called a “discourse of participation and civil society.” The state, however, is crucial because it provides the overarching framework within which social participation unfolds and it is the primary source of funding for such projects. In short, over the last ten years, the state--supported by an extensive network of policy institutes, academic institutions, NGOs, INGOs, and IGOs--has had a major intellectual influence in shaping the way participation is understood, defined, and conceptualized.

### **The Pillars of Social Participation**

What are the key underpinnings of the discourse of social participation in Chile? First, participation can be defined through a process of elimination--that is, by understanding what it is not. By excluding certain modes of participation, we can narrow the definition of social participation. The first and foremost objective of social participation has been to control popular participation and channel it in appropriate directions. The following statement, found in *Temas de Participacion*, written by Ricardo Brodsky, the director of the Division of Social Organizations, reflects these concerns:

We cannot confuse participation with mobilization. It cannot be that participation is understood as people in the street yelling. I think the law understands this and points to this. The mechanisms of participation are much more complex and must seek to channel the concerns of citizens and avoid such mobilizations...if participation is adequately channeled such mobilization can be avoided.<sup>56</sup>

Popular forms of mobilization--i.e. the act of marching, of occupying public spaces, and openly challenging the authority of the state through contentious repertoires and acts of disruption--are repertoires of collective action that are seen as associated with popular culture and should be discouraged because they are destabilizing. Mobilization, demonstrations, and protest are seen as the epitome of disorder and incivility, and are treated as issues of stability and national security. This reading of popular repertoires of

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<sup>56</sup>Brodsky, Ricardo 1997. *Temas de Participacion* no. 4 April p.6 (emphasis mine)

contention is linked to a fundamental understanding of the lower classes as “potential delinquents” and of those who organize such protests as agent provocateurs.

Instead, more appropriate and controlled mechanisms of participation should be identified and encouraged. As one DOS bureaucrat put it: “They (the popular sectors) have to find ways of participating and expressing their demands *that are more civilized*.”<sup>57</sup> This statement underscores the complex linkages between the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm as a social scientific discourse and a bourgeois cultural understanding of the role of civil society and participation. The neo-Tocquevillian paradigm is, in the final analysis, a bourgeois understanding of participation. From the perceptive of state policymakers, the question is how to foster “civilized” forms of participation in the *pasaje* without resurrecting a dormant *pueblo* (i.e. the mass social movement of workers, the urban poor, and the lower middle classes that occupied central public spaces and that is the nemesis of the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm).

It is also important to point out, then, that Brodsky’s statement is indicative of the parameters of participation because it excludes a whole range of political activities: it excludes from the discourse of social participation things such as protest, marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, barricades, land invasions, etc.--in short, many forms of participation that have been central to popular sector collective action are seen as illegitimate forms of participation. On those occasions when these types of collective action do take place, they are portrayed in the media as a threat to stability and democracy.<sup>58</sup>

Deterring popular mobilization was also an important concern of the dictatorship which after several years of repressing popular participation, sought to organize forums

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<sup>57</sup>Interview with Division of Social Organizations official, March 1998

<sup>58</sup>President Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle publicly condemned such protests as a threat to democracy in 1995, when students and coal miners marched in downtown Santiago resurrecting images of the mass demonstrations of the late 60s and early 70s.

for citizen participation at the local level that were juridically inoculated and protected from what they viewed as the virus of politics.<sup>59</sup> As early as 1975, the dictatorship was attempting to encourage specific types of participation<sup>60</sup> and by the early 1980s it was creating spaces at the local level for carefully controlled participation in municipal government. The dictatorship's understanding of the role of popular participation shares important parallels with the *concertacion*. In short, Brodsky's statement, as well as others, point to a nexus of convergence between Pinochetismo and the *concertacion*: popular protest and mobilization is disorderly and noisy, and must be avoided. Participation must be more ordered and controlled. The scope of popular participation should also be limited and important decisions should be left to the experts who have the knowledge and expertise to understand complex issues.

As documents of the *Division de Organizaciones Sociales* show, social participation is also seen by policymakers as providing the space for a social and cultural transformation that can buttress the neoliberal model. Social participation has been one of the pillars of *concertacion* policies designed to "deepen democracy" following the transition. Social participation--i.e. participation that is largely disarticulated from the political sphere (depoliticized participation)--was also viewed by *concertacion* planners as one the key components of the strategy for social and economic development following the transition: "In order to make the struggle against poverty more effective, it is indispensable to transfer state resources as well as social capacities that allow the poorest sectors of society to play an active role in their own development."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>The long term outcome of this project is enshrined in the 1980 constitution.

<sup>60</sup>One key area was women, where the dictatorship used mother's centers as a forum for disseminating the regime's message and to transform popular culture. See Valdes, Teresa and Marisa Weinstein 1993 *Mujeres Que Suenan Las Organizaciones de Pobladoras en Chile: 1973-1989* Santiago: FLACSO

<sup>61</sup>Galaz, Ernesto 1991. "Participacion Social y Profundizacion Democratica" Unpublished Document of the Division of Social Organizations

Social participation, then, has been one of the pillars of democratic deepening because it was seen as having an impact in three key areas: (1) First, social participation was seen as crucial to the effort to eradicate extreme poverty because it would empower people to solve their own economic problems (i.e. a form of social democratization that is consistent with the neoliberal model). Social and community organizations also would allow for a more effective targeting of resources earmarked for community development. Indeed, social and community organizations would be a vehicle for transmitting concrete demands to municipalities and to the state.

(2) Second, social participation was seen as a cornerstone of democratic deepening because it would create spaces for locally based interest representation and articulation that would empower citizens (while at the same time containing the mobilizational potential of the popular sectors): "Social participation is intimately linked to the process of decentralization because it constitutes a concrete and efficacious way of closing the gap between citizens and the state."<sup>62</sup> Thus, participation would be centered around the municipality, which has emerged as the primary space for popular participation in the post-transition. The democratization of the municipalities and participation are intimately linked together: "With the democratization of municipal and regional governments and the creation of local channels for participation, it is possible to overcome the gap between the community and the state, making participation more concrete and real."<sup>63</sup> In a classical Tocquevillian argument, municipalities and local associations are seen as schools of democracy and citizenship. In so far as was feasibly possible, the sphere of citizen participation would be separate and autonomous of political parties (and thus would constitute "safe"--i.e. depoliticized--participation).

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<sup>62</sup>Un Gobierno Para los Nuevos Tiempos op. cit. p.29

<sup>63</sup>Galaz, Ernesto 1991 *ibid.* p.26

(3) Finally, and perhaps most important, social participation was also seen as the vehicle for cultural and identity transformation through creation of a “civic culture” and the development of social capital: “Strengthening the organizational capacities of civil society is crucial to social development.”<sup>64</sup> State ministries and agencies that have extensive interactions with popular organizations articulate a new conceptualization of citizenship through the promotion of “participatory” citizenship that stresses participation in local associations in pursuit of the “real needs of the community.”<sup>65</sup>

Social participation is also seen as a vehicle for the formation of self-reliant citizens. As a report by the Division of Social Organizations (DOS) put it:

Through the development of efficient instruments and methodologies, the DOS contributes to the transformation of the recipients of social programs into protagonists in the resolution of their problems, thus overcoming the problem of citizens becoming passive receptors of paternalist state actions.<sup>66</sup>

Participation, in short, is a means of empowering citizens to solve their own problems (thus alleviating the state of such burdens). The DOS (and the array of institutions concerned with participation and social policy), moreover, are seen as transformative agents engaged in a process of social engineering--transforming those who participate as recipients of social programs from “passive dependents” into “protagonists.” In theory, then, empowerment works by “transforming” the recipients of social programs--i.e. by turning what were previously passive receptors into protagonists in their own social (i.e. cultural) and economic development.

### **Teaching “Responsible Citizenship”**

The fundamental pillars of social participation, and the underlying model of civil society that it entails are disseminated to community leaders and municipal social workers through MINSEGOB, DOS, FOSIS, NGOs, academic institutions, social welfare

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<sup>64</sup>ibid. p.29

<sup>65</sup>The discourse of real needs is a code word for participation that is stripped of ideological referents.

<sup>66</sup>División de Organizaciones Sociales “Memoria de Gestión” Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno 1994



ministries, and local municipal community development departments. In coordination with municipal governments, NGOs, and academic institutions, DOS has developed and funded training programs to teach organizational leaders the art of effective leadership and participation in public affairs. In effect, these are schools for training responsible community leaders.

In these schools, participation is defined, broken down into different components and activities (diagnosing problems, obtaining information, making decisions, petition writing, evaluation of projects, etc.) and operationalized.<sup>67</sup> Participants are taught what it is to be a “responsible community leader” and appropriate forms of exercising citizenship. These schools, then, can be understood as a form of disciplinary institution where a specific dimension of citizenship—that associated with participation and state-society relations—is redefined and reorganized. In these classes, the *dirigente* (organizational leader) is provided with a formula for analyzing problems and for addressing the municipality and the state to bring attention to such problems. They are provided with pamphlets and booklets outlining and defining responsible citizenship, where participation is defined as:

Responsible and determined intervention of organized groups in decisions that affect their daily lives and their immediate physical environment (neighborhood, municipality) without the mediation of political actors. It is distinct and separate from political participation.<sup>68</sup>

The use of the word responsible is a code word for “appropriate.” Mobilization, protests, and marches, by contrast are “irresponsible.” Indeed, *dirigentes* are also informed of recent trends in popular participation, where “accord and consensus predominates over social and political confrontation. Traditional forms of social mobilization (i.e.

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<sup>67</sup>Universidad de Santiago de Chile Facultad de Administracion y Economia “Curso de Capacitacion Para Dirigentes Sociales de la Region Metropolitana” Santiago:1996 Unpublished manual given to participants in courses for community leaders and municipal social workers.

<sup>68</sup>*ibid.* (italics mine)

contentious collective action) have lost relevance.”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, municipal social workers who attend these courses are told that one of the key dimensions of municipal relations with the organized community is that of “discipline” (*disciplinamiento*). This role involves the “shaping of conduct that is defined as correct.”<sup>70</sup>

Citizenship schools are intended to create a specific social space, complete with corresponding compartmentalized subspaces of participation, that are carefully defined and circumscribed. The idea that participation is limited to intervention in the “immediate physical environment” of the neighborhood or municipality, and is autonomous from political actors is reflective of the attempt to compartmentalize, depoliticize, and rationalize participation. In effect, then, the objective is to enframe participation within a particular physico-cultural space. Several arenas for local participation are outlined and defined in these courses: community development (*desarrollo comunitario*), social programs (*programas sociales*), project funding (*fondos concursables*), and social services. These arenas are contained primarily within the territorially defined space of the municipality. All of these spaces of participation are embedded within a model of development that is “centered on cooperation and alliances between the state, civil society, and the private sector through mechanisms of consultation, accords, and cooperation.”<sup>71</sup> One of the effects of this is to create the appearance of a set of structures within which participation takes place.

We may note the continuity between this definition and the definition of participation articulated by the dictatorship in the early 1980s when it was beginning to transfer resources and functions to the municipalities:

Social participation must be efficient...Thus, demagogic formulas that are unrealistic cannot be accepted...Intermediary organizations should only aspire to participate in areas or issues that are directly related to their

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

immediate objectives. Under no circumstances should *participation lose its virtue* by intervening in areas or levels that are alien to its specific interests.<sup>72</sup>

The similarities between social participation in democracy and authoritarian social participation are clear: they are separate from politics, and focused on immediate, local concerns. The penetration of politics (demagoguery) into social participation, furthermore, is associated with a loss of civic virtue.

### **The Institutions of Social Participation**

An array of institutions has emerged to deal with the question of popular participation. As pointed out above, in order to underscore the seriousness with which participation is viewed by the *concertacion*, policymakers in the Aylwin government created several agencies to deal with questions relating to the problematic of popular participation. However, the discourse of social participation is disseminated through other institutions as well. The National Solidarity Fund (FOSIS) and other government agencies and ministries are also intimately concerned with the question of popular participation. The ministry of health, for example, has provided resources for the creation of a network of citizens health care organizations under the rubric of “health care with the people” (*Salud Con La Gente*), which is primarily oriented toward community participation in prevention.<sup>73</sup> The ministry of housing has adopted similar programs: they have created committees that work with the ministry to make suggestions on how to improve the delivery of services.<sup>74</sup> The objective of these participatory programs is to build “civil society” and to create the conditions for constructing a civic culture, while at the same time creating spaces for a dialogue between the state and society. Local governments

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<sup>72</sup>Ministerio del Interior 1982. Primera Reunion Nacional de Dirigentes Vecinales 25-27 Octubre 1982 Santiago (unpublished document)

<sup>73</sup>Weinstein, Marisa 1997. “Participacion Social en Salud Acciones en Curso” Santiago: Nueva Serie FLACSO

<sup>74</sup>Luz Nieto, Maria 1998. “Participacion en el Sector Vivienda” *Nociones de Una Ciudadania que Crece* Santiago: FLACSO

(municipalities) have also become crucial actors in attempting to build *comunidades cívicas* (civic communities).

Grassroots participation has also emerged as one of the central topics of research and investigation in NGOs and social science departments at universities in Chile. Intellectual institutions such as CED, FLACSO and CIEPLAN have focused much of their research on the topic of popular participation. Some of the most established and influential NGOs in Chile, such as PARTICIPA and SUR, have as one of their central missions the objective of building specific forms of citizen participation that are compatible with liberal democracy and that can be a catalyst for social and economic development.

Many of these institutions have been deeply influenced by scholarly research on the topic of participation and its impact on development.<sup>75</sup> This influence is clearly visible in the articulation of goals and objectives. PARTICIPA, for example, views participation as “a tool for personal, group, local and national development. PARTICIPA believes in participation as a methodology for group work, as an operational strategy for a project with the people.”<sup>76</sup> In short, PARTICIPA is committed to the developmental model of democracy. PARTICIPA’s mission is framed as a transformative project: PARTICIPA “promotes the *creation of* informed, organized, *responsible* and participatory citizens as well as the articulation of various actors and sectors of society: state, market, and civil society.”<sup>77</sup> SUR is an NGO that is more directly concerned with the issue of poverty, and has been associated with more left wing elements within the *concertacion*. Nevertheless, it too has become deeply embedded in the effort to transform popular culture. One of SUR’s central missions is to “incorporate the poor in the development of

<sup>75</sup>Putnam, 1993 op.cit.

<sup>76</sup>PARTICIPA 2000. Memoria Institucional 1999-2000

<sup>77</sup>ibid.

their communities and spaces, such that they may gain access to a better quality of life” and forge a civic community.<sup>78</sup>

Many of the NGOs that work with popular sector organizations are linked to the *concertacion* through membership in the political parties of the *concertacion*, and through extensive participation in social welfare policy development and execution. NGOs are also linked through the state and those ministries that are concerned with social and economic development and welfare. Many of the social spending policies implemented by the *concertacion* since the transition have made NGOs an important actor in executing social policy.<sup>79</sup> As we shall see, municipal governments also have entire departments, staffed with professionals, whose mission is to manage the spaces in which popular participation takes place.

There is, then, an entire organizational network of intellectuals and policymakers working within the state, within municipalities, and within NGOs and academic institutions who focus on the problem of “participation” and “building citizenship” as a subset of the broader problem of “poverty and development.” Indeed, social participation is a centerpiece of the government’s National Program for Overcoming Poverty.<sup>80</sup> From this standpoint, then, it can be said that the question of popular participation is a discursive component of the development question. Moreover, these intellectuals and policymakers, and their institutions are closely linked to each other as a policymaking and intellectual community: they share many common assumptions and they are all embedded in a common idiom. They know each other well and encounter each other in seminars sponsored by the state, in conferences sponsored by universities, in political party meetings, and in countless other institutional contexts. They participate in joint endeavors

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<sup>78</sup>SUR Centro de Estudios Sociales y Educacion 1999

<sup>79</sup>Hardy, Clarisa 1997. *La Reforma Social Pendiente* Santiago: Fundacion Chile 21

<sup>80</sup>Ministerio de Planificacion 1994. Programa Nacional de Superacion de la Pobreza Compromesas y Metas

and some even have positions within the state as well as in NGOs and academic institutions. In short, these agencies and organizations are all part of a policy community that is embedded in the same broad discursive framework.

Networks of intellectuals within the state, NGOs, and academic institutions that focus on participation have also been strongly influenced by an international network of institutions that focus on the question of development. Indeed, they can be seen as part of a broader transnational advocacy network<sup>81</sup> that has significantly influenced and shaped development and democratization policies in Chile. Changes in the discourse of development and participation that were taking place in intellectual circles in western Europe and the United States (i.e. the emerging hegemony of the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm) have been very influential within the *concertacion*. The ideas of “democratizing development”--focusing on participation in small grassroots organizations, government decentralization, and working through local governments and NGOs--had become hegemonic within the broader international epistemic community that supported the *concertacion*. Somewhat ironically, this conceptualization of participation dovetails rather nicely with the atomized, fragmented, depoliticized world left behind by the dictatorship.

International governmental organizations (IGOs), such as the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank, and a range of international NGOs marketed policies that fell under the rubric of “building civil society” by offering incentives to states that implemented such policies. International organizations initially provided much of the funding for organizations that have become the spearhead of a project of reorganizing popular civil society in Chile. The World Bank and European and Canadian governments provided start up funds for organizing the national solidarity fund (FOSIS), an institution that focuses on participation and community development that has been at the forefront of

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<sup>81</sup>Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink 1998. Activists Beyond Borders Advocacy Networks in International Politics Ithaca: Cornell University Press

integrating and incorporating popular social movements. Between 1990 and 1991, the governments of Canada, Norway, Spain, Finland, and Holland provided 20 million dollars to FOSIS.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the Interamerican Development Bank provided loans for the development of small businesses in popular communities. The Inter-American Development Bank has also provided funding for developing more effective municipal governance.<sup>83</sup> These funds have been an “element of fundamental importance for the instauration and development of numerous new programs that have had a considerable social impact.”<sup>84</sup> A cornerstone of the intellectual framework that undergirds these efforts is oriented toward building a viable civil society. In short, the intellectual influence that INGOs, research centers, and IGOs were able to exert over intellectuals within the *concertacion* was pervasive.

The state has invested considerable resources in promoting organizational development and social participation at the community level--i.e. in promoting the development of a modern civil society. One of the organizations created by the *concertacion* has been the National Solidarity Fund (*Fondo de Solidaridad e Inversion Social*--FOSIS). FOSIS has been the prototypical institution for the construction of citizenship in the post-transition. The approach used by FOSIS has been used by other post-transition agencies and ministries to foster popular participation. FOSIS is an institution that has been central in the endeavor to strengthen community organization and participation.

FOSIS emphasizes social development by “financing projects that are locally designed which improve the quality of life of people *participating in base level organizations*.”<sup>85</sup> It was created in 1990 with the explicit objective of repaying the social

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<sup>82</sup>Ministerio de Planificacion y Cooperacion 1992. “Informe FOSIS” August

<sup>83</sup>Ministerio del Interior Subdireccion de Desarrollo Regional 1999. “Programa de Fortalecimiento Municipal Construyendo Juntos el Nuevo Municipio”

<sup>84</sup>Ministerio de Planificacion y Cooperacion “Informe FOSIS” August 1992

<sup>85</sup>FOSIS 1999. *Aprendizajes de la Experiencia FOSIS 1997-1999* Santiago: Ministerio de Planificacion

debt that had accumulated during the dictatorship. Since 1990, the objective of FOSIS has been expanded to include developing social and human capital through the experience of participation and cooperation.<sup>86</sup> In short, FOSIS has been engaged in a process of social engineering aimed not only at the distribution of resources but at the transformation of popular culture. Indeed, its primary goal has been to build citizenship and to support the development of civil society. However, as Paley has pointed out, the great irony is that “under the guise of supporting civil society, the government may actually stifle a civil society that thrived more powerfully under authoritarian rule.”<sup>87</sup>

The resources that FOSIS distributes are earmarked primarily to benefit “third sector” associations in civil society. The policy emphasis of FOSIS has been on contracting NGOs to work with small, grassroots organizations that are focused on self-improvement (soccer clubs, youth groups), social and community development (neighborhood councils, progress committees, etc.), and economic development (small business ventures and job training programs). The goal has been to develop small, local organizations that work toward achieving tangible objectives that have been agreed upon by the organization.

Although internally FOSIS approach is infinitely more democratic and participatory than the organizations created by the dictatorship, it has one thing in common with the organizations fostered by the dictatorship--the absence of politics, the reduction of decisionmaking to tangible and extremely localized questions, and the absence of a global structural approach to understanding poverty. Instead, the idea is that citizens work together at the local level to solve their immediate problems with solutions

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<sup>v</sup> Cooperacion

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Paley, Julia 2001 *Marketing Democracy Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* Berkeley: University of California Press p.146



that do not demand any significant adjustments by the state (other than resources whose distribution is decided in the insulated upper echelons of the state).

That is, while poverty may ultimately be a structural problem endemic to the way in which the neoliberal economy is organized, these political problems are seen and presented as unalterable realities. For example, when people lose their jobs as a result of a downturn in the business cycle, these are simply unavoidable processes that are a naturally occurring phenomenon--much like an earthquake or hurricane. The discourse of social participation argues that citizens must find ways to overcome these problems not by organizing to demand fundamental changes in the neoliberal order, but by working together at the local level and cooperating with each other. FOSIS has been a pioneer in the implementation of this vision of participation.

In 1999, FOSIS spent slightly over 58 million dollars funding local development programs. The most important priorities for FOSIS have been job training for young people, support for small businesses, rural development, and the development of community organizations (i.e. local civil society). In 1999, funds for these programs were distributed as follows:

Table 2-1 Distribution of FOSIS Funds<sup>88</sup>

Small Business ( <i>Programa de Apoyo a la Microempresa</i> ):	30.7%
Job Training ( <i>Chile Joven</i> ):	25.4%
Organizational Development ( <i>Entre Todos</i> ):	22.3%
Rural Development ( <i>Desarrollo Productivo Rural</i> ):	23.7%

The remainder of the resources were spent on a variety of smaller programs: senior citizens groups, fisheries, and cultural groups. As can be seen, the bulk of FOSIS resources went to integrate people into the capitalist market economy, either as a small business or as labor. The core objective of all of these programs, however, has been to stimulate the development of social and human capital. Nevertheless, the priority placed

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<sup>88</sup>Source: FOSIS 1999. *Aprendizajes de la Experiencia 1997-1999* Santiago: Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación

on small business and job training programs underscores the linkages between civil society and the capitalist economy.

Substantial material and institutional investments have been made by the state to motivate people to participate in these types of associations. Along with popular NGOs, small, grass-roots self-help type organizations acting at the local level have been the primary recipients of the bulk of the resources distributed to organizations in civil society. This has provided the impetus for many social movement organizations (SMOs) to reconfigure themselves as non-state public associations (i.e. third sector organizations) in order to be eligible to participate in state programs, and has also been a factor in the gradual disarticulation of the social movement networks that were built during the 1980s. After the transition many leaders of popular movements opted to participate in the context of grassroots organizations that were recognized by the state and which were given resources by the state. Thus, instead of bolstering the infrastructure of emergent SMOs, which could potentially destabilize the status quo, the *concertacion* undertook a project that was aimed at recentering movement politics at the local (i.e. municipal) level. Indeed, the explicit objective of FOSIS has been to privilege local organization:

FOSIS has privileged local space as the best level for decisionmaking. Local space is appropriate and appropriable. It is the level where poverty is lived and experienced and where coordination of key actors, such as public agencies, the municipalities, social organizations, the third sector, and private enterprise can work together effectively.<sup>89</sup>

Social participation is also intended to foster a sense that the people have been active participants in the creation of the existing social order, and that they are protagonists in their own development. Thus, it is intended to create the sense that the current status quo was actually the creation of those who participate in grassroots organizations. "The people"--as one municipal bureaucrat told me--"must see that they have relevance, that participation really is important, and that their decisions really have an

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<sup>89</sup>ibid. p.61

impact.”<sup>90</sup> A central part of the discourse of social participation is that citizens should be empowered to solve their own problems through cooperative endeavors at the grassroots--i.e. through the creation of social capital.

### **Conclusion: Social Participation, Discourse, and Power**

Social participation, then, has emerged as a discourse in the Foucaultian sense: it has come to constitute a relatively well bounded area of knowledge that is underpinned by a common set of assumptions and parameters that is shared across important sectors of society (state policymakers, municipal officials, academics and intellectuals, NGOs). These premises and assumptions frame the parameters within which it is possible to speak about issues concerning civil society and participation. Framing the parameters of popular participation is also crucial to defining the participation rights that are associated with citizenship.

The discourse of social participation also undergirds and frames a set of power relationships. By defining participation according to certain criteria and parameters, social participation also can be understood as a technique of power that attempts to produce certain forms and styles of participation that bolster a particular social formation (while at the same time attempting to exclude other forms). Indeed, Foucault argued that discourse and power are intimately related to each other: “Power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”<sup>91</sup> Further, Foucault also suggested that discourses--coherent organized bodies of thought--provide the foundation for building relationships of power: “In any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot be established without the

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<sup>90</sup>Interview with FOSIS representative to the municipality of Lo Espejo June 2000

<sup>91</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit. p.27

production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.”<sup>92</sup> The discourse of social participation, many of the core elements of which are shared by the *concertacion* and the *Pinochetista* right, has had the effect of constraining and enabling thinking, writing, and speaking about popular participation in the post-transition period.

As articulated by intellectuals and policymakers, “social participation” and the model of participation within which it is embedded, has become the “paradigm” for popular participation in the post-transition. The discourse of social participation also underpins a relation of power between the state and popular organizations. However, this power is not wielded for the purposes of exclusion, repression, or marginalization. It is used as a vehicle to attempt to include and to transform--i.e. to produce specific behaviors and cultural attitudes that are complementary to the neoliberal order. Power, as Foucault has argued, is wielded in the service of producing things: “Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.”<sup>93</sup>

Social participation, then, can be viewed from two different vantage points: seen from within the parameters of the paradigm it can be read as an attempt to increase citizen participation in an orderly and rational fashion, and to provide citizens with the tools to more effectively participate in a society that is based upon capitalism. Alternatively, from outside the discourse, the model of participation advanced by the discourse of social participation can be viewed as a significant step forward in the dissemination and refinement of techniques of domination. From outside, social participation is a way of enframing and organizing a space within which popular organizations and movements can act.

Beneath the protagonism and empowerment of social participation, then, can also be found a subtle transformation in the dynamics of power and social control: instead of

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<sup>92</sup>ibid. p.28

<sup>93</sup>Foucault, Michel 1977 op. cit. p.194

power being concentrated in the state's ability to control through repression or the threat of coercion (which remains lurking in the background), in theory, self-regulating citizens are to emerge from within the cocoon of the associations of developmental democracy--i.e. citizens who by participating according to the rules behave in ways that support the status quo.

Viewed through a Foucaultian prism, then, the discourse of social participation informs a discipline that organizes the space of participation. Disciplines, as Foucault argued, "organize an analytical space."<sup>94</sup> In this case, the analytical space to be organized is the space where citizenship is defined and constructed. The effort to inculcate civic virtues through social participation can be analyzed as a significant change in the dynamics of power: from this perspective, the "civic culture" is one manifestation of disciplinary power that becomes internalized within the individual. Disciplinary power, as conceptualized by Foucault, works from within, and at the microlevel of the individual:

Disciplines work locally, entering social processes, breaking them down into separate functions, rearranging the parts...and reassembling them into more productive and powerful combinations.<sup>95</sup>

Disciplines distribute individuals (enframing), break down activities into segments (education), and co-ordinate activities. Social participation, then, is a form of discipline that trains people in the proper exercise of citizenship in a liberal democracy.

The relationship between the center and the fragmented sites where such disciplines actually work is complex. Foucault rejected totalizing arguments and argued that the disciplinary powers of the modern state originate in dispersed local sites well away from the centers of state power: prisons, schools, hospitals, local government offices, etc. These dispersed sites, according to Foucault, do not necessarily have to converge into an

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<sup>94</sup>ibid. p.143

<sup>95</sup>Mitchell, Timothy 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect" *State/Culture State-Formation After the Cultural Turn* George Steinmetz (editor) Ithaca: Cornell University Press p.86

overall pattern of class domination.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Foucault has been criticized for not providing mechanisms to understand how these fragmented processes converge into a hegemony.<sup>97</sup>

Social participation and the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, however, can be understood as a discursive tissue that connects the center to the dispersed and fragmented sites where the disciplinary processes that are associated with citizenmaking unfold, thus providing a mechanism for analyzing and understanding the complex dynamics of the relationship between these dispersed sites and the broader landscape of hegemony in the neoliberal era. Social participation provides a broad discursive umbrella within which discipline works in dispersed sites such as municipalities, state agencies and ministries, and the network of NGOs that work with the state.

The neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, furthermore, has an affinity with fragmentation and atomization: decentralization and small groups are the institutional waters within which neo-Tocquevillian forms of participation navigate. The internal administrative reorganization of the state that began under the military regime and that has continued in the post-transition period, as previously pointed out, can be viewed as a form of enframing that fragments and compartmentalizes social, political, and administrative space. On this view, enframing is the process of creating the appropriate institutional/administrative spaces (the dispersed sites) within which the state's project of transforming and modernizing popular culture is implemented (and, as we shall see, resisted). Within the localized, dispersed, and fragmented administrative spaces of municipal community development offices and state agencies created through enframing, citizens are taught how to participate and be good citizens. In the context of these dispersed physico-administrative spaces, in short, the state attempts to produce modern citizens.

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<sup>96</sup>Jessop, Bob 1990. *State Theory Putting the Capitalist State in its Place*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press

<sup>97</sup>Harvey, 1990 op. cit., Mitchell, 1998 op.cit.

The discourse of social participation that has underpinned the effort to “install citizenship” (along with the creation of institutions for the processing of social conflict) has been one of the pillars of a tenuous hegemony. Institutions to manage social conflict created by the *concertacion* have managed to contain potential opposition by creating a maze of bureaucratic trenches that insulate the core of the state from challenges from below, and that compartmentalize popular movements. Within these trenches the state attempts to transform popular culture and mold citizens.

This attempt, however, has been only partially successful in redefining popular culture and citizenship. Indeed, post-authoritarian hegemony is in many ways incomplete and partial. That is, the “*pueblo*”<sup>98</sup>--the nemesis of social participation--still lurks latently in the trenches. It reveals itself in small, localized forms of collective resistance: sporadic protests that take place at the municipal level are constantly taking place. Another strategy of resistance has been exit and non-participation. Indeed, the *pueblo* has developed many techniques and strategies of resistance that have enabled it to continue to evade the state’s transformative efforts and pose a latent threat to the established order.

One of the pitfalls of problematizing participation and the development of civil society in this way, however, is that the very concept of civil society risks becoming distorted in a manner that is prefaced by Keane’s precient warning that civil society can lose its radical edge and its democratizing potential:

Those who call for a new civil society paradigm, or who think of it politically as a substitute for unconvincing or dying ideologies like socialism, nationalism, and Third World liberation, risk turning civil society into an ideological concept. If attempted, it would entrap usages of the language of civil society within a performative contradiction--a language sensitive to complexity and openness would become simple and close-minded--and it would thereby paralyse its radically pluralist and democratic potential.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>The people: workers, the urban poor, and the lower middle classes that have formed the backbone of popular movements.

<sup>99</sup>Keane, John 1998. *Civil Society Old Images, New Visions* Stanford: Stanford University Press p. 65

The discourse of social participation, a blend of new left ideas and neo-Tocquevillian assumptions, risks turning civil society into a stultifying space, where democracy is truncated.



### CHAPTER 3

#### FROM *CALLAMPA* TO *POBLACION*: THE FORMATION OF COMMUNITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE *PASAJE*

##### Introduction

This chapter traces the history of the emergence and development of the *poblaciones* that together comprise the municipality of Huechuraba. The experiences of collectively organizing to build viable communities prior to 1973 are still embedded in popular memory, and continue to shape understandings of participation and citizenship. Indeed, these experiences and the culture to which they gave rise are embedded in the very shape and design of the spaces that the *pobladores* created. Thus, space is a constant historical reminder of this period.

The history of the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba (and many other popular communities) also suggests that--contrary to some views--prior to September 11, 1973 a vibrant subaltern civil society was born in the process of constructing the *pasaje*. Some analysts have suggested that prior to 1973 there was no real civil society in Chile.<sup>1</sup> Civil society prior to 1973, these analysts argue, was merely a manipulated, clientelistic appendage of political society. As Castells has argued: "The *poblador* movement was created by the political parties...we must speak of a branch of *pobladores* in every party rather than a movement of *pobladores*." While this may have been the intention of a civilian political class that, as Salazar and Pinto<sup>2</sup> observe, has always sought to exercise hegemony and control over civil society, the effort of political party leaders to build a base

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<sup>1</sup>Oxhorn, Philip 1995. *Organizing Civil Society The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. Castells, Manuel 1983. *The City and the Grassroots A Cross Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>2</sup>Salazar, Gabriel and Julio Pinto 1999. *Historia Contemporanea de Chile I Estado, Legitimidad, Ciudadanía* Santiago: LOM Ediciones

of support through the creation of a *poblador* sector had unintended consequences. One of these unintended consequences was the birth of a *poblador* movement that while heavily influenced by political parties, nevertheless developed its own understandings of the world. The *poblador* movement drew on elite discourses as well as their own traditions and practices to shape the *pasaje*. Although closely linked to political parties, then, this subaltern civil society began to develop its own understandings of reality by articulating popular practices to the broader narratives of the political parties. Indeed, Chile is an example of a case where a subaltern civil society emerged in the 1960s to become a key historical actor. The subaltern civil society that emerged is fragmented and complex and demands a more nuanced approach that examines the articulation of elite discourses with popular culture.

### **The Urban Revolution--The *Pasaje* Emerges**

Huechuraba today is a low income municipality that is currently in the process of expansion as industries have begun to sprout up in the municipality. Indeed, urban planners have earmarked Huechuraba for industrial development and for middle class residential living. Huechuraba is a relatively new municipality as well. It is one of the administrative subdivisions that was created in the 1980s when the dictatorship began to implement its policy of decentralization and deconcentration by transferring responsibility for key social services to municipal governments. Prior to 1981, Huechuraba had been part of the broader *comuna* of Conchalí, a municipality that is located on the northern periphery of Santiago. For the purposes of administration--i.e. to make the delivery of social services easier and the management of popular communities more efficient--the dictatorship divided Conchalí into two different municipalities, thus giving birth to the municipality of Huechuraba.

Huechuraba's history as a locus of popular struggle really begins in the 1960s. Until the mid 1950s, Huechuraba's population remained more or less stable. Most of the land in Huechuraba was comprised of unused farming land that was owned by a few

wealthy absentee landowners who lived in other areas of Santiago. A few small lower income communities were intermingled with this open farming land. These low income communities were generally quiescent and fairly conservative in their political orientations. The majority of the communities that comprise the core of what today is the *Comuna* of Huechuraba, however, were established in the late 1950s and 1960s, when a combination of government housing programs and land seizures changed the political, social, and economic landscape of Huechuraba.

The 1960s witnessed a veritable urban revolution in Santiago as shantytown dwellers, mobilized by the Christian Democratic, Communist, and Socialist parties, exploded onto the public stage to demand housing and social services. The "Movement of *Pobladores* Without a Home" (*Movimiento de Pobladores Sin Casa*) that was born in the mid 1960s was a key protagonist in this process. The 1960s, then, was the period in which the *poblador* movement (*movimiento poblador*) was born. It was also a period in which poor people--shantytown dwellers, the homeless, and those who exist on the margins of the formal economy--emerged to become a political actor and to become incorporated into the body politic as a political actor. The 1950s and 1960s is also a period when the periphery of Santiago was created through a combination of urban planning policies that were designed to manage the flow of migrants into Santiago and to turn *callampas* into viable communities, and through land occupations led by *poblador* organizations. The 1960s, then, served to create a physical space and a social and cultural space--the *pasaje*.

In the late 1950s and 60s, Huechuraba's population also expanded as government sponsored housing programs--such as the Frei administration's *Operacion Sitio*, a program designed to give small plots of land to urban shantytown dwellers--increased the population living in Huechuraba. During *Operacion Sitio*, the government bought much of the land from landowners and distributed it to the *pobladores* in small plots. Three large communities were created in 1969 in Huechuraba through *Operacion Sitio*. The Frei

government assigned the land that would give rise to *La Pincoya I*, *La Pincoya II*, and *Villa Wolf*. Like all *Operacion Sitio* projects, however, these plots lacked critical infrastructure: in most cases the *pobladores* lacked access to water, electricity, and had to build their own homes. That is, all that *Operacion Sitio* provided was legal title to a small plot of land. As one woman recalled:

They (ministry of housing officials) would come by and mark off the land with chalk and string, and leave us there, with our families and a small piece of land with no house, no water, and no electricity....it is not like today when the government gives you a home that is already complete.

The *pobladores* lived initially in plastic carps that were draped over wooden two by fours hammered into the earth. Thus were born the *callampas* (now called *campamentos*) from which would emerge the *pasaje*.

People in many of these communities literally built the *poblacion* with their own hands. The results of this construction process can be seen in the uneven nature of the housing--no two houses are exactly alike. Also, it can be seen in the way space is internally distributed and organized. To build the *pobla*, the *pobladores* resorted to collective action--both to work collectively to build their communities and to pressure the government for access to services. Neighbors often collaborated with each other in building their houses--they would form work crews and work on clusters of houses in a particular block.

*Operacion Sitio* communities often gave rise to strong neighborhood councils and other community organizations in order to mobilize pressure on the governments of Eduardo Frei (1964-70) and Salvador Allende (1970-73) to provide the infrastructure that was needed for community development--building materials for housing construction, roads, water, electricity, and schools. Territorial organizations, such as the neighborhood councils (*junta de vecinos*), became one of the primary vehicles for mobilizing to demand

the improvements that would turn a *campamento* into a viable community.<sup>3</sup> There were powerful selective and collective incentives to join and participate in the neighborhood council or the community development committee. In 1968, neighborhood councils were given legal standing as representatives of their respective communities and as interlocutors vis a vis the state by the Frei government. The structure of representation in which the councils were embedded had a strong corporatist hue. That is, the government licensed neighborhood councils and gave them juridical standing as the sole representative of a particular community or "territorial unit" (*unidad vecinal*--UV).

The Frei government, however, soon found itself overwhelmed by the demand for public housing construction and the infrastructure needed to build viable communities. The inability of state sponsored housing programs to satisfy the growing demand for viable housing contributed to a dramatic increase in the number of land seizures in the latter 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Between 1967 and 1972, there were over 300 land seizures on the periphery of Santiago.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, land occupations (*tomas de terreno*) began to take place in the peripheral areas of Santiago almost routinely in the late 1960s. The statistics reveal a veritable revolution in urban space that took place in the latter 1960s and early 1970s: between 1969 and 1971 there were 312 land seizures involving 54,710 families (approximately 250,000 people).<sup>6</sup> By 1972, there ministry of housing had documented 275 *campamentos* in which there were 456,000 people living. One out of every six inhabitants of Santiago lived in a *campamento*. Countless others lived in the *poblaciones* and *conventillos* (slums) that dotted the urban landscape below the Plaza Italia--the

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<sup>3</sup>Sabatini, Francisco 1995. *Barrio y Participacion Mujeres Pobladoras de Santiago* Santiago: SUR

<sup>4</sup>Espinoza, Vicente 1988. *Para Una Historia de los Pobres de la Ciudad* Santiago: SUR

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Duque, Joaquin and Pastrana Ernesto 1972. "La Movilizacion Reivindicativa Urbana de los Sectores Populares en Chile 1964-1972" *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* December Santiago: FLACSO

physical and symbolic demarcation point that divides elite urban space and popular urban space in the national imaginary.

The period between 1969 and 1971 saw the creation of some of the larger and more legendary *poblaciones* in Santiago: *La Bandera* and *Nueva Habana* in southern Santiago, *La Pincoya*, *Pablo Neruda* and *Patria Nueva* in northern Santiago (in what is today Huechuraba), *Violeta Parra*, *Che Guevara*, and *Sara Gajardo* in western Santiago. The model for these *tomas* was established in 1957 by the *pobladores* of *La Victoria*, who engaged in one of the first large scale land occupations in Santiago.

Most of these *poblaciones* were created through land occupations. In Huechuraba, committees of the homeless (*comite sin casa*), supported by the communist, socialist parties, and in some cases the Christian Democratic parties, carried out several land occupations to demand that the government address the issue of housing. Huechuraba's location on the periphery of Santiago and the availability of land there made it one of the favored sites for illegal land seizures. Organized homeless committees from other areas of Santiago went to Huechuraba to carry out land seizures in search of a space on which to build a home.

Land seizures and mobilization to pressure the government for services and infrastructure was also a catalyst for the radicalization of many shantytown dwellers and their organizations. A particular consciousness and political culture was forged in the course of many of the 1960s land occupations. The act of creating community, in short, became an important source of identity in some *poblaciones*. Identities were constructed and solidarities were cemented in the process of struggle itself. In the late 1960s, the shantytowns became active in the emerging popular movement that became known as "*poder popular*" (popular power). This consciousness, however, was extremely uneven: some communities became militant and radicalized whereas others soon remained apathetic and quiescent. That is, what could be called a "topography of consciousness" developed during this period. Some communities developed a political culture that

became embedded in a radical ethos, while other communities were characterized by apathy and conservatism. As they were formed, communities were culturally shaped by a complex amalgam of Marxist/populist discourse and Catholic social doctrine that acted in combination with the praxis of land occupations and the subsequent mobilization of communities to demand social services to create a fragmented and often contradictory popular culture.

Two factors were critical in forging radicalized communities: first, those communities that were organizationally linked to the communist party or militant leftist parties, such as the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), generally tended to be more radicalized than those associated with the more centrist Christian Democratic party. The communist party provided critical organizational and mobilizational skills that were used to collectively organize.<sup>7</sup> The communist party also provided a utopian meta-narrative that became the basis for social practices inside many communities. Second, those *poblaciones* that actually created and developed specific practices inside the community to inculcate a collective ethos also tended to remain more organized and militant over time. Nevertheless, across the periphery of Santiago, durable understandings of the role of participation and social organizations and of the role of the state would become crystallized in popular communities during this period and become a part of the culture of the *pasaje*. In short, an etiquette of participation and an understanding of the role of the citizen emerged during this period.

Too, a notion of the rights of citizens and the obligations of government also became a durable feature of the political culture. Access to a home and a viable community, for example, came to be viewed as a fundamental right that the state should guarantee and provide. As one woman remembered who participated in a *toma* recalls:

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<sup>7</sup>Schneider, Cathy Lisa 1995. *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

“We were demanding our rights as human beings...it (the act of land occupation) made me feel that I was somebody and that I could change things.”

Illegal land seizures in Huechuraba, carried out by radicalized homeless people's committees (*comites de pobladores sin casa*) linked to the communist party and, to a lesser extent, the socialist party in 1969, led to the creation of *Poblacion Patria Nueva*, *Poblacion Pablo Neruda*, *Villa el Rodeo*, and *Poblacion Ultima Hora*. These communities had a combined population of approximately 17,000 people. *Poblacion Pablo Neruda* was also expanded by a seizure of land that was adjacent to the original space allotted to the community in *Operacion Sitio*. The squatter's movement that emerged around land seizures and the demand for a home, coupled with the connections to the political left (primarily the communist party) of many squatters organizations were factors that shaped the politics of Huechuraba during the late 1960s and early 1970s and radicalized much of the population.

### **From Subjects to Participants: The Emergence of A Generation of Activists**

Luzmenia Toro--the president of the neighborhood council of the *Poblacion Pablo Neruda*--who at the time was also the president of the Federation of Neighborhood Councils of Huechuraba (*Union Comunal de Juntas de Vecino de Huechuraba*) and a militant in the communist party--was one of the key organizers of grassroots organizations during the formation the 1960s and early 1970s. She was also an important figure in organizing resistance to the dictatorship in the latter 1970s and 1980s.

Luzmenia's history of activism provides insights into the forging of a generation of grassroots political and social activists in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, the 1960s is a period that shaped an entire generation in Chile. Membership in this generation is, as one scholar has suggested, a variable that shapes political beliefs and behavior.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Hite, Katherine 2000. When the Romance Ended Leaders of the Chilean Left 1968-1998 New York: Columbia University Press



Activists in Huechuraba whose identities were forged during this period were strongly shaped by the discourses of Marxism, populism, nationalism, and Catholic social action. During this critical period, as Moulian<sup>9</sup> argues, Marxism expanded beyond the confines of political elite circles to become a “popularized philosophy” as the left came to control key nodal points in civil society: labor unions, student organizations, peasant unions, squatter and shantytown organizations, neighborhood councils, etc. Marxist ideas were popularized through the literature and art of the period. Pablo Neruda’s poetry and the songs of artists like Victor Jara and Quilapayun are prime examples of the politicization of cultural sphere and the popularization of Marxist discourse. In the *poblaciones* and the *campamentos*, activists from the communist party became, in effect, organic intellectuals that linked Marxist narratives to the daily reality that the *pobladores* were facing.

Important elements of Marxist discourse became internalized as “common sense” during this period and became staples of popular culture. In many *campamentos* and *poblaciones*, Marxist ideology articulated with popular culture and practice in the *callampas* to forge a radicalized political identity. The *poblador* began to emerge as a historical actor in this crucible of national and local political struggles. Civil society became a space for the popularization of Marxist ideas and discourses. Civil society, then, emerged as a space that housed a subaltern counterpublic within which new conceptualizations of citizenship were forged.

Conceptualizations of democracy, the role of the citizen, the role of the state, relationships between social classes, and participation were strongly influenced by the events of this period. Fundamental concepts concerning property rights were also being transformed. A song written in 1971 by Daniel Viglietti and sung by Victor Jara, a singer who was subsequently murdered by the dictatorship, underscores this change in consciousness:

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<sup>9</sup>Moulian, Tomas 1983. *Democracia y Socialismo en Chile*. Santiago: FLACSO

Yo pregunto a los presentes  
 si no se han puesto a pensar,  
 que esta tierra es de nosotros...  
 y no del que tenga mas,  
 Yo pregunto si en la tierra  
 nunca habra pensado usted,  
 que si la tierra no es nuestra  
 es nuestro lo que nos den...  
 A desalambrar! A desalambrar!  
 que la tierra es nuestra  
 tuya y de aquel,  
 de Pedro y Maria, de Juan y Jose...  
 Si molesto con mi canto,  
 a alguien que no quiera oir,  
 les aseguro es un gringo  
 o un dueno de este pais,  
 A desalambrar! A desalambrar!  
 Que la tierra es nuestra,  
 de Pedro y Maria, de Juan y Jose...<sup>10</sup>

I ask those present  
 if you haven't stopped to think  
 that this land is ours...  
 and not only for those who have more  
 I ask if in the land  
 you have never thought  
 that if the land isn't ours  
 ours is what is given to us  
 Cut the fences! Cut the fences!  
 This land is ours,  
 yours and theirs,  
 Pedro's and Maria's, Juan's and Jose's  
 If I disturb with my song,  
 those who don't want to listen,  
 surely it is a *gringo*  
 or someone who owns this country...  
 Cut the fences! Cut the fences!  
 The land is ours...  
 Pedro's and Maria's, Juan's and Jose's...

Victor Jara's song captures an important period in history: the awakening of popular consciousness and the forging of a popular political culture that challenged key pillars of the dominant social order. The song implores the people to cut the wires ("*a desalambrar*") that bar the *pobladores* from access to land. The wires, however, symbolize more than the fencing off of property and land. The cutting of the wires symbolizes cognitive liberation--the realization that those who do not have wealth and power also are citizens and have rights. A political culture was forged in the context of the events that unfolded in the 1960s that challenged many fundamental premises of Chilean society. The struggle for land and a home, and the process of organization that it entailed created a strong ethos of collective action. Activists created organizations, built networks, developed leadership capacity, and became a powerful political force: *poder popular*.

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel Viglietti sung by Victor Jara "A Desalambrar" *Canto a lo Humano* Santiago: ALERCE

Many of those who currently participate and who lead popular organizations, like Luzmenia, are those whose political identities were forged during the 1960s and early 70s. Indeed, if one goes to meetings of neighborhood councils, women's centers, and other grassroots organizations, among the more striking things is the relative absence of young people (i.e. those less than 35 years of age). Simply put, it is primarily (but by no means exclusively) those over 35 who participate in associational life in many popular communities.

Luzmenia has a long history of political activism that dates back to the 1960s, when she became a member of the "jota"--the "*juventudes comunistas*" communist youth--and was one of the leaders of a land occupation that resulted in the formation of a sector of the *Poblacion Pablo Neruda* and *Poblacion Patria Nueva*. Political parties had vibrant youth sections--the jota, the JJSS (*Juventudes Socialistas*), the JDC (*Juventud Demócrata Cristiana*)--where parties forged the next generation of activists and militants. In 1968, Luzmenia was eighteen years old, married and had three children. Her husband worked in a factory in the industrial zone of Cerrillos on the other side of Santiago. Her husband was very active in the labor movement, and was involved in organizing the workers committees and industrial belts (*cordones industriales*) that were emerging in the early 1970s to support Allende's *via Chilena al socialismo* (Chilean way to socialism). Luzmenia and her family rented a small house in El Salto, together with her sister, her sister's family and a friend. They lived in extremely precarious and overcrowded conditions. Each family lived in a room in the house and they shared a bathroom and a kitchen, both of which were outside in a shack behind the house. Luzmenia's dream had always been to own a house in which she could raise her family.

It was the desire for a home and for a space to raise her family that led her and many other women into political activism. While living in El Salto, Luzmenia had become a member of the "jota" (the communist youth) in 1966. Influenced by the emerging wave of popular activism that would become known as "*poder popular*," Luzmenia decided that

it was time to try to get a home of her own. Through her political activities in the *jota*, she had come to view having a home as a basic right that the government should provide. "The *jota*" she said, "made me realize that as a person I had many rights that the bourgeoisie was denying me...a home, adequate health care, education, a dignified salary, etc., and that made me angry." Luzmenia and Luis Jerez, another activist in the communist party, were put in charge of a regional committee of *pobladores*, that gave birth to the homeless people's committees that would organize the land seizures in 1969 that would give birth to *poblacion* Pablo Neruda and Patria Nueva. As one of the leaders of the regional committee, Luzmenia organized a homeless people's committee (*comite sin casa*) in El Salto along with several people that she knew from the local communist youth organization in her community (*Juventudes Comunistas*). She also convinced several other people who had not been in the *jota* to join and become members of her *comite sin casa*.

Initially, however, Luzmenia's idea was to obtain a house through legal means--i.e. through some sort of land grant from *Operacion Sitio*. In 1968, the committee petitioned the agency within the ministry of housing (CORVI) to provide them with access to land for housing, and got no response. It was then that they decided on a *toma*. The communist party provided critical support throughout the process. Through her connections with Gladys Marin, who was then a communist deputy in the Chilean legislature (and today is president of the communist party in Chile), her homeless committee was able to link up with several other committees and organize a land seizure in October of 1969 in an area that would eventually become part of the territory of the municipality of Huechuraba. Luzmenia had a friend in the municipality of Conchalí, who was a municipal councilman and a member of the PC, and who helped her by pointing out areas in the municipality that were most suitable for a land occupation. In exchange for

help with the *toma* she promised to campaign for him in the next municipal elections.<sup>11</sup> Nine homeless people's committees initially participated in the *toma* that would result in the creation of a new community. After the *toma* began, several more committees, upon hearing the news, also joined the *toma*. This land seizure would result in the creation of *Poblacion Patria Nueva* and *Pablo Neruda*.<sup>12</sup> The communist party and Luzmenia's husband's labor union provided material and technical support for these organizations. With the help of legislators, the PC provided funds to begin to build important public spaces that are crucial to a viable community: a school, a clinic, and a soup kitchen. They also provided legal help in defending the *toma*. Labor unions provided materials for building and assistance in organizing.

The name of the *poblacion*, *Patria Nueva* (New Nation), says something about the times. It evokes the euphoric utopianism of the time: the act of creating the *poblacion* was part of a broader project of creating a new nation, of building a new nation upon a *tabula rasa*. To Luzmenia, creating the *poblacion* was not just a way of providing a roof over her family's head, it was a new beginning. Not only would the physical structures of the *pobla* be built, but a new culture and society would be forged within these spaces. Indeed, Allende's Chilean road to socialism can be seen as a reimagination of the national community. This resonated strongly in many of those *poblaciones* that were linked to the Popular Unity coalition. The creation of the *poblacion*, then, became strongly embedded within a broader utopian project of creating a new society that would be founded on a collective understanding of society.

The struggle that was involved in creating a *poblacion* from a *callampa* would also entail the emergence of a new, yet contested, social category and identity: *poblador*.

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<sup>11</sup> Here we have an example of clientelism (the exchange of help in staging a *toma* for votes) working in tandem with radicalized activities such as a land invasion.

<sup>12</sup> The names of the communities give an indication of the spirit of the period: *Patria Nueva* (New Nation), reveals the optimism of the Allende period--a new country was being created through the actions of the people.

(As we shall see, the identity that is subsumed under the term "*poblador*" would become embedded within both a radicalized and a conservative set of meanings.) Indeed, it was a time of great hope and optimism for the urban poor. In 1970, Salvador Allende--a socialist--was elected president of Chile. As Luzmenia put it: "We had our president, and we thought that our time had arrived." Great changes seemed to be taking place as the popular classes mobilized to demand fundamental changes.

The process of organizing and consolidating a land seizure and subsequently building a viable community demanded strong organizations and an ability to sustain collective action: in short, it demanded a combination of social, political, and cultural capital. It demanded the dense network of cooperation and association that social capital provides. It demanded the knowledge of how to work with and pressure the government that comes with political capital. Finally, it demanded the complex set of symbols to sustain community solidarity that cultural capital creates. It demanded the use of a full range of collective action strategies that ranged from clientelistic interactions with patrons in the municipality and in the ministry of housing, to full scale protests and mobilizations. After occupying the land, Luzmenia and the leaders of the homeless committees organized the community by creating different committees to deal with the problems that the *pobladores* were facing. Initially, their situation was extremely precarious: they lived in "houses" made of carton, sheets of plastic draped over wooden pylons, shreds of canvas; in short, any materials that they could find were used to put a roof over their heads and shield them from the elements. Luzmenia's husband, Juan, made a floor out of some wooden planks that he scavenged at work and had to drag home on a crowded cross-town bus.

The *pobladores* in Patria Nueva and Pablo Neruda organized to solve the myriad problems that sustaining the toma created: they created a commission inside the *poblacion* to divide the land into equal plots, they also created their own "daycare center" to take care of children while adults got on with the task of building the community, they built a

soup kitchen, and committees were organized to deal with different facets of community development: groups were assigned to go out and find materials for building homes, some were sent to the markets to get food, others sought medicine and other health care items, others were assigned child care. In short, they organized to solve the problems of building the community collectively. In the process, however, they also created a subaltern civil society.

The informal organizations that were created to solve the daily problems that they faced became spaces for the forging of a popular culture inside the *poblacion*. Creating organizations to deal with the dilemmas posed by building a community from a vacant plot of land served to build spaces for developing new ways of understanding the world. A type of subaltern counterpublic--a "discursive arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs"<sup>13</sup>--was born in these spaces. In the context of these organizations, participants discussed important topics and created frameworks for developing a critical understanding of issues. As Luzmenia and others who remembered those days told me, while working to solve the problems of daily living, they discussed politics almost incessantly. They read "*El Siglo*" (the communist newspaper) on a daily basis and followed national political events closely. There were, Luzmenia recalled, regular meetings in the *poblacion* that were organized to discuss the national political situation. They also participated in political campaigns and organized to assist the Allende government once it was elected. Luzmenia reminded me of one of the reasons for their interest in national politics: the situation at the national level had a strong bearing on the daily lives of the residents of the *campamento*. Who was in power would have a strong influence on the flow of resources from the state to the *campamento*. In short, they were

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<sup>13</sup>Fraser, Nancy 1997. "Rethinking the Public Sphere A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Craig Calhoun (ed.) Cambridge: MIT Press p.123

creating a highly mobilized and vibrant associational life--only this associational life was not about bird watching or soccer playing--it was about a struggle over the basic rights of citizenship and about the society that Chile would become.

After the *toma* was finally given legal recognition by the state, a formal neighborhood council was formed and the leadership of the council did the necessary paperwork to obtain legal recognition from the Frei government.. Luzmenia was elected president of the neighborhood council, which was named *Junta de Vecinos "Matilde Urrutia"* after the nobel laureat poet Pablo Neruda's wife. Luzmenia was also a member of the mother's center in *Patria Nueva*. The neighborhood council, along with other organizations in the community, formed a *Comando de Poblacion*--an umbrella organization that unified all of the different organizations in the *poblacion*--to mobilize the residents of the community to demand the materials that were needed to build homes. The *Comando* also was created to defend the Allende government, which by 1972 was increasingly under pressure from an alliance of centrist and right wing forces.

Within the territorial space of the developing *poblacion*, this network of organizations became, in effect, a quasi-government where people learned how to manage public affairs within the community. They allocated resources, assigned tasks, interacted with the government, and participated in planning the future of the community. They collected fees (*cuotas*) from the *poblacion* to support the activities of the council. These fees were used to assist *vecinos* with specific problems. For example, one woman who needed eye surgery told me that the *junta de vecinos* provided her with part of the funds needed for the operation. Indeed, they were more or less forced to manage their own affairs by the circumstances. Since the state in many cases was not capable of providing critical services, it was up to the *pobladores* themselves to provide them. Furthermore, because the neighborhood council was legally recognized as the sole interlocutor vis a vis government, there were strong pressures to participate in the council. For a while, some *poblaciones* even created an internal police force to patrol the streets. *Patria Nueva* even



created its own "community court" to deal with minor infractions. In short, these organizations provided the infrastructure for the development of strong publics--publics whose deliberative practice consists of opinion formation and decisionmaking.<sup>14</sup>

This early period of activism, in which housing committees and other organizations mobilized to establish and build viable communities, served to shape key aspects of popular political culture. Concepts such as citizenship, the role of participation, and sovereignty became defined during this period. Indeed, for many *pobladores*, "participation" meant real decisionmaking, as a declaration of the Executive Committee of one *campamento* of this period suggests:

The *pobladores* consider it *their right* that the ministry incorporate them into future planning made by the ministry concerning housing projects.<sup>15</sup>

The organizations that were emerging and the discourse that was emerging from within these organizations suggests that a vibrant subaltern civil society had emerged in many of the *poblaciones* in Chile. Indeed, these brief comments suggest that in certain *poblaciones* at least, *pobladores* had come to reconceptualize the role of the citizen vis a vis the state and the basic rights of citizenship: it was *their right* to a home, it was *their right* to participate in the planning of their community, it was their right to be protagonists in the development of their communities, *and in deciding the contours of the social order that would define Chile*. That is, a home does not come from the benevolence of the *patron*, but from existence as a person, from having been born in Chile.

When viewed through the prism of political culture, these statements suggest an evolution in the understanding of citizenship: from supplicant to participant.<sup>16</sup> Citizens were not subjects to be passively influenced by government actions, but were active participants who could shape the course of events--who could, for example, sit down with

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<sup>14</sup>Fraser, 1997 op.cit. p.134

<sup>15</sup>Ultima Hora 29 May 1967 p.7

<sup>16</sup>Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba 1989 *The Civic Culture Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* Newbury Park: Sage

ministry officials and plan the development of a community--in short, who could take matters into their own hands. This sense of political efficacy is reflected in surveys that reveal that at the time, the vast majority of *pobladores* had come to believe that they could change a government decision or policy that they considered unfair: 81% of residents in *poblaciones* created through a *toma*, and 93% of residents of *poblaciones* created by a land grant believed that they could change a government decision that they considered unfair.<sup>17</sup> (This can be contrasted with contemporary answers to a similar question that I posed in 1999-2000 to 1002 residents of five *poblaciones*, in which only 31% believed that they could change government decisions and policies, and 61.5% believed they had no influence with the government).

In 1970, just before the presidential elections that brought Allende to office, Luzmenia and her *comando de campamento* (the leadership of the community) negotiated a stopgap measure with the ministry of housing, in which the ministry agreed to provide *mediaaguas* (essentially a wooden room that at least had a floor and kept people dry) in which the *pobladores* could live temporarily. The *comando de campamento* organized work details to bring the *mediaguas* from Maipu. Luzmenia had a "friend" in the municipality--a *companero* from the party--who had access to a municipal truck that helped to bring the *mediaguas* from Maipu (a journey across Santiago). In 1971, Luzmenia and the leadership of the council went to the ministry of housing and staged an occupation of the minister's office, demanding that the state build homes for the community. After the sit-in at the ministry, the minister negotiated with the *comando* and agreed to build permanent housing for the "*pobla*." In 1972, then, the "screaming and kicking" (*pataleo*--as Luzmenia calls her protests) and the pressure of the *comando* paid off when the ministry of housing built 2,666 homes in Patria Nueva. Salvador Allende

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<sup>17</sup>Portes, Alejandro 1969. "Cuatro Poblaciones: Informe Preliminar Sobre Situacion y Aspiraciones de Grupos Marginados en el Gran Santiago" Santiago: University of Wisconsin Development Program

even came to inaugurate the community, and posed for a picture with Luzmenia (which she prominently displays in her house).

In her study of *La Bandera*, Paley has suggested that the internal organization of many *poblaciones* can be seen as more than a rational actor solution to a public goods problem, and that instead these organizations represent “cultural work” to develop a collective identity and ethos.<sup>18</sup> That is, although they did solve key problems, a second process of forging an identity was underway as well. These identities, while linked to the discourses of political parties, used the discourse of political parties and adapted them to their own particular reality.

It can also, I believe, be said that the negotiations with the ministry and with other government officials also were an important cultural watershed: the *pobladores* came to realize, as Luzmenia put it, that they were influential actors (*actores de peso*), and had a right to sit with government officials and shape the agenda. They were not simply subjects--passive receptors of government policies--they were active participants as well. The relationship between political elites and the grassroots was experiencing a transformation as grassroots activists developed organizational and mobilizational skills. Ironically, many elites of the left and the center saw the *poblaciones* as a pliable base of support, but in the process of mobilizing them, in a strange way they unleashed a genie that would be hard to put back in the bottle. Many *pobladores* appropriated the discourse of elites and radicalized it in ways that were threatening to those very elites that had mobilized these communities. The consciousness that was forged in the process of organizing and struggling for a home and a place would influence patterns of organizing for many years.

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<sup>18</sup>Paley, Julia 2001. *Marketing Democracy Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* Berkeley: University of California Press

Events of the late 1960s--the struggle for a home and community, her links to the communist party and its network of grassroots organizations, Allende's victory in 1970, and the sense that anything was possible--strongly shaped Luzmenia's political consciousness and her identity, as it shaped the political culture of an generation of activists.<sup>19</sup> Key concepts were defined during this period: the meaning of collective action and participation, the meaning of "democracy" and citizenship, and the role of citizens vis a vis the state. People also learned critical citizenship skills: how to organize, how to mobilize, and how to work collectively to demand rights. Indeed, the lesson of the times is inscribed on the wall adjacent to the entrance to the neighborhood council of *poblacion* La Victoria: *La Organizacion Es La Forma de Alcanzar La Victoria!!* (Organization Is The Way To Victory).

By the time of the 1973 coup, then, many of the *poblaciones* in Huechuraba had become highly organized, politicized and mobilized communities. In many *poblaciones*, community activists and party leaders had forged highly mobilized communities that were mobilizing to demand fundamental changes in Chilean society. In September, 1973 this process would abruptly come to an end in the coup led by General Augusto Pinochet. The 1973 coup, the extreme repression and violence that was unleashed by the state, the subsequent neoliberal revolution from above, and the second defeat of the popular movement in the latter 1980s, have been a watershed in the lives and political orientation of many of the activists of this period. In the period following the coup, the military regime made strenuous efforts to destroy these organizations, which were seen as incubators of the "Marxist cancer."

### **The Coup in the *Poblaciones* of Huechuraba**

*Pobladores* in Huechuraba, however, began to organize shortly after the coup. Informal clandestine networks and organizations emerged to protect community leaders

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<sup>19</sup>Hite, 2000 op. cit.

from the repressive arm of the national security state. Informal organizations first emerged from within the networks of activists that had forged these communities. During the 1960s and 70s, then, a stock of social, cultural, and political capital had been created during the initial formation of these communities that *pobladores* could count on to facilitate and coordinate collective action in the post-coup environment. Initially, these groups were mainly concerned with protecting people from the state's security apparatus.

Luzmenia and several other community leaders told stories of those first few months after the coup in the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba. Shortly after the coup, Luzmenia's husband--who was a labor union leader and member of the communist party--was detained and spent eleven days in the national stadium.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, security forces came to detain her for her activities as a community leader, and she spent several days in the Buin Regiment of the army being interrogated about her role as a community activist. The reason she was detained was that her neighborhood council was named "Matilde Urrutia" (after the wife of nobel prize winning poet Pablo Neruda--who was a member of the communist party). She had also pledged to defend the Allende government in public statements made in the council, that were recorded in council documents. After she was released, she returned to the *pobla* to help organize her community to deal with the conditions created by the regime.

Like everywhere in the peripheral communities of Santiago, *pobladores* in *Pablo Neruda*, *Patria Nueva*, *La Pincoya*, and *El Rodeo* braced themselves for the defense of the *poblacion*. No longer was it a question of defending Allende's "Chilean road to socialism," after September 11, 1973 it became a question of physical survival. They mobilized the informal networks that have always been a source of tremendous resilience in times of crisis to hide people from the military. During these first months after the

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<sup>20</sup>In the early months of the dictatorship, the national stadium became a species of concentration camp for political detainees.

coup, the relative opacity and illegibility of the *poblaciones* became a valuable resource in the defense of the *pobla*. Although many activists were detained, many were able to escape detention. Indeed, many *poblaciones* presented a complex disorganized maze to the state security apparatus. Often the regime's security forces could not find people that they were looking for because those whom they were seeking to were able to move about through the maze of densely packed houses and evade their captors. Initially, the military often depended on someone from inside the *pobla*--a kind of guide--to locate different residents whom they were seeking. These "guides" were often able to delay the arrival of security forces until the person who they were looking for had fled to another location. A grapevine mode of communication--from house to house, back window to back window--was used by the *pobladores* to watch the security forces as they roamed around the *poblacion*.

If one could look, for example, at *Patria Nueva* from above in those first intense months after the coup, it would have probably been possible to see the "*tiras*" and the "*milicos*"<sup>21</sup> driving around the narrow, unpaved winding alleyways that in the winter turned to mud in their unmarked cars and jeeps, while people fled through the backs of houses in a kind of shell game. Corner houses at the entrance of the *poblacion* became a kind of early warning station when the security forces arrived. Storekeepers also kept a watchful eye out for "*los pacos*" (the police), and "*los tiras*" (undercover security agents), sending children out to spread the news when they were in the *pobla*. The elderly lady selling on the corner selling "*sopaipillas*" from her mobile stove would also become part of this informal communication web in the *pobla*. Residents who would stop to buy some *sopaipilla* obtained information: "Be careful, *vecina*, the *pacos* are on the next block looking for something." People on the streets became informal lookouts, keeping an eye out for the police. In short, the unpaved, disorganized alleyways of the *pobla* and the

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<sup>21</sup> *Tira* is slang for detective, and *milico* is slang for soldier.

informal networks that emerged like a coral reef on these labyrinths often became for the military and state security a formidable obstacle course to be traversed.

### **The Pinochet Regime and the *Poblaciones***

From the perspective of Pinochet and his policymakers, Luzmenia's world--the *pobla*--was a disorganized, confusing world that epitomized underdevelopment and political instability. Within the *poblaciones*, moreover, lurked the *pueblo*--workers, the urban poor, low level state employees--in short, the amorphous set of actors that if united could pose a formidable challenge to the regime. Thus, in the mid 1970s, as the regime began to dramatically restructure Chilean society, it also began to consider ways of reorganizing the *poblaciones* in ways that would facilitate social control. One of the goals of this restructuring became to dismantle the institutional structures in which "el pueblo" could manifest itself as an actor. A central part of this process was the physical and administrative reorganization of popular communities. This process had both a spatial and administrative component, and it would have a deep impact on the *poblaciones* of Santiago's periphery. Indeed, there is a tendency to view the impact of the dictatorship in the *poblaciones* primarily in terms of the effect that repressive actions and structural adjustment policies had on life inside the *pobla*. The impact of the dictatorship, however, extends well beyond structural adjustment and repression. The regime attempted to transform the set of values and norms upon which Chilean society had been based prior to 1973.<sup>22</sup>

The process of restructuring entailed movements of population and the irradiation of entire communities, organizational and administrative restructuring, decentralization and the creation of new municipalities. Thus, it entailed urban planning, economic policymaking, and social work. As a whole, these efforts can be viewed as an attempt to

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<sup>22</sup>Tiróni, Eugenio 1998. *El Régimen Autoritario Para Una Sociología de Pinochet* Santiago: Dolmen Ediciones

reorganize the spatial, political, and social landscape of the *poblaciones*. The dictatorship attempted to recenter popular communities within a different administrative and institutional space: municipalization and decentralization can be viewed as an attempt to territorially reorganize administrative space in a way that contains citizens at the municipal level. The specific objective of decentralization policies during the Pinochet regime was social control--i.e. more effective targeting of social programs. In short, the process of enframing--that is, of creating an appearance of structure and order--begins with the dictatorship.

The authoritarian state attempted to organize the internal social world of the *poblaciones* with an eye toward introducing what it saw as rationality and order into what was seen as the disorganized world of the *pasaje*. A phrase that euphemistically captures this process is “ordenar la chacra” (organize the pig pen)--by which is meant bringing order and rationality to the disorderly world of “lo popular.” Supporters of the dictatorship will often say “alguien tenia que ordenar la chacra” (somebody had to organize the pig pen) to justify the harsh policies of the dictatorship. The “*poblacion*” as one right wing newspaper put it was “territory alien to the state.”<sup>23</sup> Property in those *poblaciones* that still had not been legalized was regularized. Streets were paved, and a viable system for delivering mail in the *poblaciones* was put in place. Property arrangements had in many cases not been legalized, tax records were not kept, many communities were not legally recognized communities--many streets had no name, mail did not reach these areas, and many *poblaciones* lacked infrastructure such as running water and electricity. In Huechuraba, there were several *poblaciones* that had not been recognized as legal corporate entities. Moreover, many of the *poblaciones* that had been given legal recognition in Huechuraba were not fully integrated into Chilean society. These communities, in short, were disarticulated from the broader structures of society.

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<sup>23</sup> El Mercurio May 11, 2000 p.C3



*Poblaciones* that had “Marxist” names were renamed with “proper” names: thus *poblacion* Salvador Allende in La Granja (now La Pintana) became *poblacion* 11 de Septiembre, and Karl Marx street (*calle Carlos Marx*) in La Victoria became Arturo Alessandri street. The process of legalizing property arrangements, of naming and renaming streets, of giving legal recognition to communities, and of naming and renaming *poblaciones*, all were an attempt to transform what was seen as disorder, to reorganize the internal space of the *pasaje*, and to articulate the dispersed to a broader structure. They are also examples of the extent to which the regime attempted to efface popular culture.

The social and urban policies of the dictatorship were designed to fundamentally change the social and political topography of Santiago, and to transform urban popular communities--in short, to “*ordenar la chacra*.” One of the regime’s central objectives was to make the *poblaciones* more readable from the center with an eye toward eventually transforming them. Policymakers began the process of organizing the *poblaciones* to make them more transparent and knowable, thus facilitating policy interventions of all kinds: the regime regularized and legalized property rights in the *poblaciones*, began to keep more accurate tax and social records, forcefully relocated entire communities from one sector of Santiago to another in order to segregate the population more efficiently for the purposes of delivery of social services, and created entire new municipalities with an eye toward making populations more manageable and accessible to state intervention. Sixteen new municipalities were created by the Ministry of the Interior in order to facilitate the delivery of targeted social assistance and to make social control easier. The regime forcefully relocated approximately 150,000 low income people from wealthier municipalities--such as Las Condes--to poorer municipalities--such as La Granja and Huechuraba.<sup>24</sup> In relocating these communities, the goal was to concentrate poverty in

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<sup>24</sup>Rojas, Sergio 1984. “Políticas de Erradicación y Radicación de Campamentos, 1982-1984” Santiago: FLACSO Documento de Trabajo 215

certain municipalities.<sup>25</sup> In the process, many people lost their homes and were forced to live with relatives as “*allegados*.”

In Huechuraba urban planning resulted in the creation of three new communities during the military regime: *Villa Esperanza*, *Los Libertadores*, and *Rene Escauriaza*. These three small *villas* were built in the eastern sectors of Huechuraba. They were built by the government to house military personnel and police officers. At the same time, the existing *poblaciones* saw their population increase as the average number of families living in each household increased. The dramatic decline in government spending on public housing during the military regime meant that as children grew up and got married, they were forced to live with relatives as “*allegados*” (the arrived).

The regime also fundamentally reorganized the delivery of social welfare services. First, through a series of surveys (*Encuesta de Caracterizacion Socioeconomica Nacional-- CASEN*) designed by policymakers as an instrument for classifying people according to their level of poverty and need, a detailed process of identifying and socially mapping entire populations in the *poblaciones* was begun. The CASEN survey provides detailed information on many aspects of living conditions in low income communities that are used to determine eligibility for state welfare subsidies: income, housing type, number of people living in the dwelling, appliances in the household, number of people employed, etc. The dictatorship used the CASEN survey to map the population in order to more effectively target the delivery of social welfare services.

Administrators also began a process of political and organizational mapping. Records of community and organizational leaders were kept. Today, each municipality has a directory (*catastro*) of all community organizations and their leaders, complete with addresses and phone numbers. Fairly accurate data is kept on community leaders and on

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<sup>25</sup>Rojas, Sergio 1985. “Relocalizacion Socioespacial de la Pobreza. Política Estatal y Presion Popular, 1979-1985.” Documento de Trabajo no.280 Santiago: FLACSO January

the activities of social organizations. In short, the regime reorganized the administrative and physical space of the *poblaciones* in ways that made these areas much more legible to policymakers and the state.

One result of the dictatorship's urban policies was that they increased the administrative and technical capacity of the state to intervene in the *poblaciones* through public policy. The dictatorship's policies increased the state's capacity as an actor in two important ways: (1) first, the institutional capacity of the state--defined as the ability to make and implement laws--was enhanced. By enhancing the ability of the state to "see" the *poblaciones*, policymakers enhanced the state's capacity to implement laws. The internal reorganization of the *poblaciones* also increased the state's political capacity<sup>26</sup>--i.e. the capacity to intervene to shape, mediate, resolve, and repress conflicts. Too, making the *poblaciones* more legible from the center also was crucial in the reorganization of power relationships because power became more continuous and uniformly distributed across the surface of society. The power of the state reached into areas that it had not previously penetrated.

### **The Emergence of Popular Economic Organizations**

*Pobladores* in La Pincoya, Patria Nueva, Pablo Neruda, and El Rodeo resorted to the lessons in organizing that they had learned during the *toma* and organized clandestinely to resist the regime. During the transition period (1983-89), the communities of Huechuraba--*La Pincoya*, *Pablo Neruda*, and *Patria Nueva*--were among the most vocal and active in the opposition to the dictatorship.

As the intense wave of repression subsided somewhat, *pobladores* turned their attention to a second set of problems being faced by the people in *La Pincoya*, *Pablo Neruda*, and the other communities of Huechuraba: hunger, poverty, and unemployment.

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<sup>26</sup>Grindle, Merilee S. 1996. *Challenging the State Crisis and Innovation in Latin America and Africa* Cambridge University Press

The economic restructuring policies of the regime and the drastic transition to a neoliberal capitalist economy had a devastating impact on the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba. Rising unemployment and the reduction of the state's welfare services worked like a vice to squeeze the *pobladores* of Huechuraba. The main source of income in Huechuraba's *poblaciones* had come from paychecks that people had earned in the industrial sector. Economic liberalization decimated these industries and thousands of workers lost their jobs. In 1975, industrial production dropped by 25%, and GDP fell 13%. Unemployment in many of the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba reached 30%. Luzmenia's husband lost the job in the factory in Cerrillos that he had had since the early 1960s. In short, thousands of people in the *poblaciones* and *campamentos* that ringed Santiago became unemployed and had to find a new source of income.

*Pobladores* in Huechuraba cobbled together a variety of individual and collective strategies to deal with the problems they faced: they turned to the informal economy and to collective action to respond to the crisis. Luzmenia's husband began to sell things on the streets of Santiago and Luzmenia began to organize collective action in the *poblacion*. Thus were born the popular economic organizations (*Organizaciones Economicas Populares-- OEPs*): soup kitchens, health care networks, committees of the homeless and the arrived, artisan workshops, and committees of the unemployed. An "Organization for Human Rights" that was created in 1974 to protect people from the repressive apparatus of the state was expanded to include soup kitchens, homeless people's committees, committees of the unemployed, youth groups, and other organizations together in protest against the regime. Thus, as early as 1975, *pobladores* in Huechuraba began to organize to deal with the impact of the dictatorship's policies.

In the latter 1970s and 1980s, Luzmenia became deeply involved in the struggle against the dictatorship. Typically, it was former communists who took the lead in

organizing grassroots organizations.<sup>27</sup> They had the most experience in organizing clandestinely. Luzmenia was extremely active in building popular economic organizations--such as soup kitchens and popular dining halls--in Huechuraba, and in organizing protests against the municipality of Conchali. In 1975, Luzmenia and a group of women in *Patria Nueva* and *Pablo Neruda* organized a popular dining room (*comedor popular*) to feed people in the pobla who had reached the brink of desperation. In 1977, they also organized alternative health care clinics to provide health care to residents of the *poblacion*. More generally, in the latter 1970s, *poblador* organizations began to emerge for the first time to articulate specific demands and grievances. An important issue that was the catalyst for much organizing during this period--especially in Huechuraba--was housing. In 1977, the Catholic Church sponsored a meeting of the *poblador* organizations from the western sectors of Santiago that resulted in the creation of housing commissions (*comisiones de vivienda*) to negotiate debt issues with public utilities (water and electricity). This was one of the first instances of popular collective action during the dictatorship.

In 1979, a broader organization, the Metropolitan Housing Commission (*Comision Metropolitana de Vivienda*), was created by *pobladores* with the help of the Catholic Church to articulate demands for debt relief and to demand government solutions to the acute shortage of public housing. Many people had lost their jobs as a result of structural adjustment, and they were saddled with monthly payments for housing. Debt was emerging to become a crucial issue during the dictatorship. Luzmenia participated in the commission as a representative from the Conchali sector of Santiago (at this time, Huechuraba was still not a municipality). The *poblaciones* of Huechuraba, like everywhere else, were beginning to experience the acute overcrowding problems that resulted from the regime's dramatic cuts in spending on public housing.

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<sup>27</sup>Schneider, 1995. op.cit.

Another problem facing some communities in Huechuraba was that the regime was beginning the process of returning some of the land that had been seized through land occupations to their former owners, and *pobladores* in some of the communities that had not acquired legal standing prior to the *coup* were worried that in the process they would lose their homes. That is, since some of the lands that had been seized in a *toma* were being returned to their original owners, there was a real concern that people might be forced to relocate. Such was the case with *Villa El Rodeo*, which had been created on a plot of land adjacent to *Patria Nueva*, but had not become a legally recognized community by September 1973. Indeed, *El Rodeo* was one of the last *tomas* that would take place prior to the coup. It took place only days before the September 11 coup. Thus, when the coup took place, *El Rodeo* was still classified by the government as a *campamento*--a legal classification that falls short of the status of community. The military carried out a survey of the area and classified *El Rodeo* as a *campamento*. A *campamento* does not have the same corporate legal rights as a *poblacion* or *villa*. The term *campamento* (camp) in itself suggests a transitory and unresolved status. Only when a *campamento* becomes a corporately recognized community does it acquire the title of "*poblacion*" or "*villa*." In theory, then, the government could force the residents of *El Rodeo* to leave. Since *Villa El Rodeo* was known to have been formed with the support of the communist party, it seemed likely that the government would evict the *campamento*. These issues, then, were among those that led *pobladores* to organize the housing commission. Demands for debt relief, for a favorable resolution of the status of the *campamentos*, and for accelerated public housing constitute one of the first overt political acts of *poblador* organizations. These demands were articulated in the form of petitions sent to General Pinochet himself and to the ministry of housing and urban development.

In Huechuraba, Luzmenia and other community leaders from *Patria Nueva*, *El Rodeo*, *La Pincoya* and *Pablo Neruda* also began to organize to pressure the municipality of Conchalí for concessions. They sent a petition to the mayor of the municipality

demanding action to solve the problem of hunger in the *poblaciones*. In early 1980, Luzmenia and approximately one hundred other women from Huechuraba and Conchali marched on the municipal office buildings and barricaded the gates to the municipality demanding powdered milk for their children. Some of these protests bore fruit: where possible the mayor would attempt to accommodate their demands. The mayor worked with the Catholic Church to bring food items into the *poblaciones* for distribution. Many of these early protests took the form of small scale sit-ins (*tomas*) at the local municipality, small scale land occupations, and the barricading of public thoroughfares in peripheral communities to publicize the plight of shantytown dwellers.

These localized protests in Huechuraba and other municipalities were centered on lifeworld issues: housing, health care, and demands for relief from the harsh economic conditions created by the neoliberal policies of the regime. The process of organizing around these demands can be seen as representing the emergence of a new and more autonomous terrain of conflict--the sphere of reproduction. Prior to 1973, the consumption demands of the *pobladores* had taken a back seat to the more central struggle between organized labor and capital. In the period following the coup, they would assume center stage in the struggle between the *pueblo* and the dictatorship. Because of the regime's policies, the epicenter of popular struggle had shifted from the factory floor to the narrow alleyways and streets of Santiago's *poblaciones*. Moreover, it was more difficult to control the physical space of the *poblacion* than the factory floor.

Despite their focus on specific issues relating to consumption, lurking beneath these demands for relief from overcrowded conditions, for milk for children, or for medicine for the sick and the elderly was the outline of a broader "injustice frame"<sup>28</sup> that became the unifying factor that linked many grassroots organizations and which provided

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<sup>28</sup>Gamson, William A. 1992. "The Social Psychology of Collective Action" *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Miller (eds.) New Haven: Yale University Press

the discursive basis for the further development of a *poblador* movement. By the early 1980s, then, for *poblador* organizations in Huechuraba and elsewhere, the economic problem had become a political problem--the problem was the dictatorship. A statement made by a leader of a land occupation that took place in early 1983 crystallizes the evolution of the *poblador* movement:

Pinochet has to leave. The dictator has to go. The solution that we propose is for Pinochet to resign. That is not only the solution for the pobladores or the workers, but it is the solution for all Chile.<sup>29</sup>

This injustice frame was filtered through the idiom of a form of oppression that was rooted in the dynamics of a multi-dimensional understanding of social class: it was the "*pueblo*" that was being oppressed by the regime. As Luzmenia put it:

We saw that Pinochet was giving everything to the rich...some of us worked in Las Condes, and saw the rich getting richer...and then when we need more milk for our children, the government says no. How can it be that the rich get more from the government than the poor? The government is supposed to be with the *pueblo*. This would never have happened under Don Salvador or even Don Eduardo. When they governed, the government was for the *pueblo*, not for the *momios*.

Luzmenia uses the term "*el pueblo*" (the people), not to identify the entire body of citizens in Chile, but to identify those who are subordinate: workers, shantytown dwellers, and lower middle class groups that are the bearers of popular culture. Indeed, when I asked her who exactly the "*pueblo*" was, she gave an answer that defined the *pueblo* in spatial, cultural, and economic terms: "The *pueblo*" she said, "is all the people who live below the Plaza Italia." The Plaza Italia is a key spatial reference point in Santiago that provides a symbolic class based demarcation of urban space--those who live in areas that are below the Plaza are the lower classes, and those who live in areas above it are the upper middle classes and the wealthy (i.e. the *momios*). This demarcation point has an economic, a cultural, and a spatial dimension. Economically it is comprised of those who are in one

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<sup>29</sup> Entrevista A Eduardo Valencia Presidente de la Coordinadora de Pobladores 1983. *Aracauria de Chile* vol.25



way or another exploited, culturally it is comprised of the bearers of popular culture, and spatially it encompasses the *poblaciones*, the *campamentos*, and the urban slums of Santiago. Embedded within this statement, then, is a whole set of normative understandings of citizenship, of the role of the state vis a vis society (the state as shelter for the pueblo), and the meaning of social and economic justice.

By the end of the 1970s, then, all over the periphery of Santiago, there were signs that a process of reorganization as a prelude to mobilization was underway. In 1980, shantytown organizations affiliated with parties of the left (communist, socialists, and the movement of the revolutionary left) organized a series of small scale land occupations (*tomas*) to expose the magnitude of the housing shortage. These occupations ended with government repression, but the actions of the *pobladores* were widely discussed in shantytowns across Santiago. In October of 1981, a national congress of *pobladores* published a list of demands (*Pliego de los Pobladores de Chile*) that articulated a wide range of grievances: housing, health care, social programs, demands for local democracy, and education.

In this process of reorganization, OEPs played a crucial role. Although OEPs were defined as self-help organizations that were based on mutual-assistance, they came to constitute an important space for the development of popular resistance to the regime. The logic for creating and joining these organizations was to collectively confront a terrible and unjust situation, which in and of itself gave these organizations an underlying political significance. The basic theme that provided the *raison d'être* of these organizations was solidarity and an ethos of collectivism--values that ran in direct contradiction to the neoliberal emphasis on individualism.

OEPs, then, provided a space for the development of ideas and values that were contrary to the neoliberal paradigm that was being preached by the regime. They also provided a space for public discussion and conversation, in which the unfairness of the regime's policies became a topic of discussion and debate. Thus, they provided a space

for housing a subaltern counterpublic, where “members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”<sup>30</sup> The soup kitchens, the cooperatives, the workshops, and the committees that were emerging in the poverty belt that surrounded Santiago provided a social space in which political activists--like Luzmenia--could meet to rearticulate and sustain their social networks and develop an injustice frame. As Luzmenia explained:

During that time, we could not openly talk about politics because people were too afraid. But, we discussed the economic situation and how unfair things were for the pobladores. So, we talked about politics without really talking about politics. Slowly, the people in the olla began to realize that their misery would not end until “Pinocho” was out of power.

Activists like Luzmenia who were instrumental in creating OEPs imprinted their organizations with their values.

### **From “Pobla” to Movement: The Emergence of the *Coordinadoras***

These sporadic local protests served as the catalyst for the development of coordinating committees that linked different organizations under the umbrella of one organization. The first of these coordinating committees were municipal *coordinadoras* that served to build horizontal networks among the different organizations in the municipality. The *coordinadoras* emerged primarily through informal gatherings of organizational leaders in the community. The leadership of the coordinating committee in Conchali was democratically elected by the leaders of the organizations in Conchali. Although party affiliation did not play a direct role in electing the leadership, in practice votes for candidates were often based on party affiliation. At the very incipient stages of the formation of broader networks, then, the basis for partisan based cleavages were built into the fabric of the movement. Everyone who voted knew the party affiliation of the candidates for leadership and voted accordingly. A second criteria was leadership ability.

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<sup>30</sup>Fraser, 1997 op. cit. p.213

Luzmenia was elected to the leadership committee of the *coordinadora* as a vice-president.

In the latter 1970s and early 1980s, several larger umbrella organizations were also created to coordinate the activities of grassroots organizations across the periphery of Santiago. The first of these, the *Metropolitana de Pobladores* (METRO) was created in 1979. Luzmenia was one of the founding members of METRO. METRO was envisioned an umbrella federation that would incorporate all of Santiago's poblador organizations. However, when communist party activists--Luzmenia among them--were elected to the key leadership positions within METRO, organizations that were affiliated with the Christian Democratic party left METRO. Luzmenia became the leader of the delegation that represented METROs in the Huechuraba-Conchali sector of Santiago. Many, although not all, organizations from *Patria Nueva*, *Pablo Neruda*, *La Pincoya*, and *Villa el Rodeo* became affiliated with METRO.

With the help of the Christian Democratic Party, organizations loyal to the PDC would create *Movimiento Poblacional Solidaridad* (MPS) in 1983. Another group of organizations opted to become associated with MPS. In the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba, then, these splits were reflected in grassroots organizations, as those that were affiliated with the communists aligned themselves with METRO, and those that were associated with the PDC became members of *Solidaridad*.

The economic collapse of 1982-83 was the catalyst for what O'Donnell and Schmitter have called the "resurrection of civil society" in which previously dormant sectors of civil society suddenly emerged to become active again. The deep economic recession of 1982-85, one of the worst in Chile's history was one of the primary motivating forces for the emergence of protest in Chile's shantytowns and popular sector communities. Hunger, unemployment, and desperation drove workers, the urban poor, and some of the middle classes into the streets to demand change:

The crisis created the conditions that enabled one sector of the people to

become a mass movement, for the networks to assume the risk of expressing themselves as a mass movement.<sup>31</sup>

The *poblaciones* of Huechuraba became extremely active participants in the mass movement that emerged during this period. The single factor that best explains the mass protests that began in 1983, then, is the collapse of the neoliberal economic model. However, as the history of Huechuraba shows, a process of reorganization and mobilization had been underway since 1975.

In Huechuraba, activists like Luzmenia dug barricades and banged pots. They challenged the police forces to enter the *poblaciones*, and when they did, they showered them with rocks and molotov cocktails. They blockaded *Avenida Recoleta*, the main thoroughfare that enters Huechuraba, and they blocked key intersections in order to stop traffic. The objective was to occupy public space. On the nights during which protests took place, the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba became virtually a war zone as residents and security forces clashed in the streets of the *poblaciones*. These protests were not sporadic, anomic impulses, but were purposely carried out by activists who met to plan the protests. As Luzmenia explained:

We felt that the dictatorship was shaky, and that this was the moment to apply pressure. In those first few months, we believed that if we could kick and scream enough, “*Pinocho*” would leave.

Luzmenia described the meetings that took place before protests, where activists would meet to plan the protest. The Catholic Church provided space to plan the protests in the Churches of Huechuraba. They worked through their coordinadoras and consulted with METRO and CUP to coordinate their activities with protests that were taking place in other *poblaciones*. Prior to the beginning soup kitchens stockpiled food for the protesters in anticipation of shortages. Health care committees availed themselves of first aid supplies to treat those who would be wounded. Safe houses were designated for those seeking refuge from the security force. In short, mobilization and protest was a carefully

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<sup>31</sup>Moulian, Tomas 1997. *Chile Actual Anatomía de Un Mito* Santiago: Universidad ARCIS p.287

coordinated process that entailed the entire organized community in the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba.

In the period between 1982 and 1986, then, grassroots organizations in the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba became part of the broader movement for democracy that was emerging across Santiago and that embraced shantytown dwellers, working class neighborhoods, and middle class groups. The organizations in the *poblaciones* became enmeshed in a web of networks and relationships with organizations in other sectors of Santiago through the emergence of the *coordinadoras* and umbrella organizations, such as METRO and CUP.

In 1983, the *coordinadoras* and umbrella organizations in Huechuraba became articulated to political party elites through organizations like PRODEN (*Proyecto de Desarrollo Nacional*). PRODEN--organized by Jorge Lavandero, a left wing Christian Democrat--became an organization that linked over two hundred grassroots organizations and *coordinadoras*. After the 1980 constitution was ratified in a plebiscite, political elites began to realize that mobilization would be required in order to put pressure on the dictatorship to begin a transition process.<sup>32</sup> Thus, after 1980, political elites began a conscious process of rebuilding their linkages to grassroots organizations. PRODEN played an important role in several ways: it was important in providing a space for the rearticulation of linkages between political elites and grassroots organizations. It also began the process of organizing popular mobilization. Finally, PRODEN was important in putting the issue of transition to democracy on the public agenda and in expanding the public sphere: Before protests took center stage in mid 1983, Lavandero and PRODEN provided the first public challenge to the regime when they presented Pinochet with a demand for a transition to democracy that was widely publicized.

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<sup>32</sup> Aylwin, Patricio 1998. *El Reencuentro de los Demócratas Del Golpe al Triunfo del No*. Santiago: Ediciones Zeta

Popular movement organizations in Huechuraba became enmeshed in this associational network that linked political elites to civil society through Luzmenia's participation in METRO and MUDECHI-- Mujeres de Chile (Women of Chile) and MOMUPO--Movimiento de Mujeres Populares (Movement of Popular Women), feminist organizations that had linkages to both the communist party and PRODEN. In early 1982, Luzmenia had helped to organize MUDECHI, an organization of popular women created with the support of the communist party to resist the regime. MUDECHI was established in 1982, and since its creation it had strong ties to the communist party. MUDECHI was important in organizing hunger marches and demonstrations against the Pinochet regime. In the 1980s, MUDECHI organized several marches with the objective of publicizing hunger in the *poblaciones* and became linked to the Democratic Popular Movement (MDP). Luzmenia was also closely linked to MOMUPO, an organization of popular sector women that was not linked to any specific political party.

### **The Decline of Popular Movements**

By the end of 1986, however, the popular movement that the *poblaciones* had spawned in the late 1970s seemed to be in decline. Several factors account for this decline: political elites opted to negotiate with the dictatorship to produce a pacted transition to democracy. Elite negotiations place much less of a premium on popular mobilization. As elite negotiations proceeded, political party organizations became disengaged from grassroots organizations and a "*politica de cupulas*"--politics of elites--began to take emerge that distanced and insulated itself from the world of popular movements. Thus, while the early phases of the transition had been characterized by a process of relatively close articulation between parties and movement organizations, the last phases were characterized by disengagement. This disengagement closed off a key space that had given grassroots organizations a voice in elite political circles.

Grassroots popular movements were also divided around the moderate (*concertacion*)-radical (PC, MIR) cleavage, a division that was reflected in the

organizations of Huechuraba as well. Third, the ability of Pinochet to repress popular mobilization also had a significant impact on the willingness of people to take to the streets in protest. Finally, the economy began to recover and growth rates began to accelerate by 1987, which diminished the urgency of the protests, as the middle class abandoned the streets in favor of a negotiated way out the authoritarian impasse. While there were other protests in 1987 and 88, they were not nearly as intense and strong.

Nevertheless, as we shall see in the following chapter, these experiences in organizing were to be used in the final stages of the transition and in the first year of the Aylwin government to demand a greater role in local government and more influence over policymaking.

### **The Impact of the Coup on the Generation of Activists**

The events of the late 1960s and early 1970s shaped the political culture of an entire generation and continues to provide a key reference point for many community activists today, who assess post-dictatorship democracy through the filter of those experiences. Community activists who participated in organizational life during this period, and who learned their roles as citizens during the late 1960s drew powerful lessons from the experiences of these times. Activists whose political identities were shaped during this period share many basic assumptions about the social and economic rights of citizenship.

In Huechuraba, Luzmenia Toro was a central figure in the development of her community--from the creation of the community in the late 1960s, through the travails of the dictatorship and the transition process, Luzmenia has been a tireless activist.

The massive defeat of the popular project that the *coup* represents served to teach some community leaders an even more powerful lesson that has seared the consciousness of many grassroots activists: challenging the powers and privileges of the elite is not a viable endeavor. As one community activist in Huechuraba described it:

For me, the 1973 coup was the end of a dream. It taught me that in the end

the wealthy always win. They have the money, they have the power, and they have the military. So, we have to play by their rules. How can we, who have nothing, win? We also must protect the democracy that we have, even if it is not perfect.

The generation of activists that was shaped during this period, then, was split by the 1973 coup and by the defeat of the popular movement in the latter 1980s. Some grassroots organizers chose to vote with their feet and exercise the “exit” option and withdraw from public life entirely, while others opted to participate within the parameters set forth by the *concertacion*, and yet others continue to hold to the ideals that they were socialized into in the late 60s and early 70s. In short, the coup and the subsequent revolution from above that followed provided a stark lesson in the use of coercive power. The massive defeat of the popular movement that the 1973 coup represents can be seen as representing the first step in the historical construction of a set of power relationships, which have become embedded in institutions and structures, that would severely cripple the ability of popular movements to act in the post-authoritarian period.

Luzmenia, however, continues to believe strongly in the ideals for which she struggled in the late 1960s and early 70s:

Many people have left the party since the dictatorship. They have decided that it is better to join the PPD or the socialists. Not me. I continue to be a communist because I believe in the dream of Salvador Allende. That dream has not died, we have to continue to struggle to achieve it. The socialists have given up the struggle...they may say they haven't but they have...they are in bed with neoliberalism.

Her identity continues to be strongly influenced by membership in the communist party. She is, above all else, a member of the communist party. In her rhetoric, Luzmenia fits the “party loyalist” orientation described by Hite:

Party loyalists believe that the key to politics and to any possibility of social transformation lies with the strength of their political parties...Party loyalists are wary of Chile's new politics of consensus, and there is a nostalgic tone in their discourse.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Hite, 2000 op.cit. p.20



Although Luzmenia argues that social organizations should be autonomous from political parties, she firmly believes that the ideals of the party should provide a guide for action within social organizations. The very purpose of social organizations is consciousness raising and building of counter-hegemony and popular power from below. Luzmenia views the “politics of consensus” that has characterized post-transition politics in Chile with disdain, calling it a consensus in favor of the wealthy and the powerful:

This is a consensus where the *pueblo* gets screwed by *los de arriba*. Everything benefits them--the laws, the distribution of wealth, even the government.

She accuses those sectors of the left--the renewed socialists (*socialistas renovados*)--that have become part of the *concertacion* of compromising their values and of surrendering to neoliberalism and capitalism. Indeed in her house, there are pictures that leave no doubt as to the forces that shaped her political identity: one photograph shows her holding a molotov cocktail standing on the front lines of a march against Pinochet in her *poblacion*. Prominently displayed next to that picture is a photograph of the three political figures who have most influenced her identity: a picture of Salvador Allende standing with Luzmenia when he went to inaugurate the *poblacion*. There are also pictures of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Luzmenia, then, has never ceased being a no holds barred activist. As she calls herself, a *mujer de lucha* (woman of struggle). Bureaucrats, administrators, and elected officials in the municipality of Huechuraba grudgingly respect her for her combative spirit. As we saw, even detention by the security forces of the dictatorship did not prove to be a deterrent to her activism as she returned to her community and immediately began organizing soup kitchens and other grassroots organizations.

Since the *concertacion* took power in 1990, Luzmenia continues to be involved in community activism in her municipality as president of the Union of Neighborhood Councils of Huechuraba and as president of her neighborhood council. She is also active

in Huechuraba's women's organization. In 1993, she ran for a seat in Congress as a representative of the communist party and polled 5.53% of the vote in her district (Conchali, Huechuraba, and Renca). In 1997, she ran for a seat on the municipal council of Huechuraba and polled 6.04% of the vote, narrowly missing the opportunity to serve as a municipal councilwoman.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DEMOCRATIC MOMENT: THE TRANSITION IN THE MUNICIPALITY AND THE *POBLACIONES*

#### Introduction

Much of the focus of democratic transitions and democratic consolidation has been on elite politics--the negotiations and interactions that take place between contending elites that result in elite settlements that enable a democratic transition to take place.<sup>1</sup> These negotiations shape the basic framework for transitions to democracy. This leaves unanswered the question of the transition at the local, grassroots (municipal) level. There is another transition, however, that takes place at the grassroots, and which unfolds in the dispersed labyrinths of municipalities and the *pasajes* in which they are embedded. This transition involves interactions and struggles that take place in what could be called the associational substructure of democracy: within organizations, within movements, and within local governments. The transition at the local level goes a long way in shaping key characteristics of democracy: the extent of popular participation, the qualitative aspects of associational life, and patterns of interaction between local government and the organized community.

In the immediate wake of democratic transitions there is what could be called a "crystallization" phase within the period of democratic consolidation during which political and social actors define and shape their roles in new "democratic" institutions through a process of dialogue and interaction within the institutions that have been created

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<sup>1</sup> O'Donnell, Guillermo, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Przeworski, Adam 1991. *Democracy and the Market Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* Cambridge University Press; Higley, John and Richard Gunther 1992. *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* Cambridge University Press

through the elite negotiations that have led to a settlement. It is a period in which people adapt to and shape the institutional framework of democracy. Formal institutions--such as state agencies, formal associations, municipal offices--are shaped and molded through everyday use and everyday practice. Although elite negotiations, in the context of path dependence, create the basic institutions and parameters of the democratic playing field, it is the actors who play on this field that give the field its specific qualities. Actors bring with them their experiences and their understandings and in effect fill in the institutional skeleton through their actions. Elite negotiations, moreover, cannot hope to account for the complexity of events taking place at the grassroots level.

In this crystallization phase, formal institutions for popular participation have a certain amount of flexibility and "give" in them, such that the interactions of participants shapes and gives form to regularized patterns of conduct that is to take place within institutions. That is, formal institutions for popular participation can be used for purposes for which they were not intended by their designers. During this crystallization period, the possibilities are more open for people to assign meaning to and give content to associations. Patterns and modes of interaction within grassroots associations, between grassroots associations, and between state officials and associations are in a phase of development and adjustment to new rules of the game, where there is some room for expanding and consolidating a more participatory democracy. Although this process is path dependent, the outcome hinges largely upon the actions of grassroots participants, local officials, and political elites.

Institutions, then, undergo a certain amount of social construction through praxis, where through their practices and actions participants routinize a mode of interaction and establish parameters of acceptable conduct. In testing and negotiating the parameters and limits of a new democracy, participants build and give form to a species of habitus of citizenship--a manner and style of exercising the rights and duties of citizenship (association, deliberation, and participation). In short, durable and resilient patterns of

interaction and participation are constructed which gives form to the broader public realm.

In Chile, during the period immediately preceding and immediately following the formal transition to democracy (roughly from the beginning of 1989 until the end of 1991), there was a brief “democratic moment” that unfolded in municipalities in which neighborhood councils played an important role and experienced an upsurge in popular participation, as leaders of popular movements moved to democratize the councils and oust those leaders that had been appointed by the dictatorship (who were seen as little more than informants and community watchdogs for the regime). This democratic moment represents more than an effort to democratize the neighborhood councils and other formal organizations in the community. It was a brief flirtation with popular forms of democracy that contained within it the seeds of counter-hegemony.

Two distinct democratic imaginations clashed in the process of shaping local institutions for popular participation: one imaginary appropriated the language of the *concertacion* and transformed its meaning by articulating it to radicalized conceptualizations of the people, popular sovereignty, and to demands for participation. The other vision, by contrast, was much more consistent with the actual intent of elites in the *concertacion*. That is, this sector sought to participate within the general framework that had been established by the 1980 constitution-- Chile’s elite settlement.<sup>2</sup> Although this confrontation unfolded on the terrain of liberal democratic discourse, behind this struggle can be seen the outlines of past struggles in which a civilian political class has consistently sought ways to dominate and exercise hegemony over popular civil society. That is, although the discursive carapace of liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism is in many ways new, the dynamics of the struggle are embedded in the age old dilemma of how to tame and control the *pasaje*.

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<sup>2</sup>Cavarozzi, Marcelo 1992. “Patterns of Elite Negotiation and Confrontation in Argentina and Chile” *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* John Higley and Richard Gunther (editors) Cambridge University Press

### **“Modernization” and Community Organizations**

The attempt to democratize and empower the neighborhood councils and other formal community organizations was an attempt to undo the changes in the laws concerning the neighborhood councils that had been put in place by the Pinochet regime. An integral part of the “seven modernizations” Pinochet announced in his Chacarillas speech in 1977 was a wholesale reorganization of community structures for popular participation and municipal government that was centered around administrative decentralization and changes in the laws that governed community organizations.<sup>3</sup> These laws and policies represent an attempt to weaken the neighborhood councils and other community associations, and to sever them from political parties.

The regime developed a variety of strategies designed to build a base of support in the *poblaciones*, and one of them was to use formal organizations as a vehicle to gain a foothold in popular communities. In the mid 1970s, a series of decree laws (*decreto ley*) were enacted by the Pinochet regime that made the neighborhood councils and other associational structures a virtual extension of state authority in the *poblaciones*. In 1976, the Ministry of the Interior began an extensive review of the neighborhood councils and terminated the legal standing of many councils that had been centers for political activity prior to 1973. In 1977, the process of reopening the councils began under close state supervision, through the ministry of the interior.<sup>4</sup> Leaders of these organizations were appointed by the municipality, and these appointments were reviewed by the ministry of the interior. Organizations were required to send a petition to the Minister of the Interior formally requesting recognition from the state as a civil organization (*Organizacion Civil*), giving detailed information about the organization, its purposes, and its leaders.

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<sup>3</sup>The seven modernizations were based on privatization (health care, retirement pensions), changes in labor laws, and decentralization and municipalization. For a useful summary see Oppenheim, Lois 1999. *Politics in Chile Democracy: Authoritarianism, and the Search for Development* Boulder: Westview Press

<sup>4</sup>Comision Chilena de Derechos Humanos 1989. “La Recuperacion de las Juntas de Vecinos: Un Primer Paso Para la Democratizacion de la Vida Comunal” Documento de Trabajo #86 Santiago

Appointees to leadership positions in the councils were carefully checked for any past affiliation with leftist organizations. Many of those that were appointed were branded by leaders of popular movement organizations that opposed the regime as little more than stooges of the regime. In short, the neighborhood councils had lost all legitimacy during the Pinochet regime.

After the 1980 constitution officially went into effect, the dictatorship began to implement what they saw as permanent changes in the structure of local government and community organizations that would remake the role played by formal organizations. In a speech given at the first national reunion of neighborhood council leaders held in October, 1982 Pinochet announced that the time had come to reorganize local participation:

The moment has arrived to juridically organize the direct participation of the community in local government. One of the key pieces in this process is the neighborhood councils. However, we shall take steps to ensure that these do not become manipulated for political purposes.<sup>5</sup>

Central to these changes was a wholesale redefinition of participation. Popular participation at the local level was to be depoliticized and technocratized. The role of the neighborhood council and other formal community organizations was to be extremely limited:

Intermediate community organizations should only aspire to participate in matters that have a direct relation with the objectives that give origin to intermediate organizations. In no case should participation be degraded, as it was in the past, by intervening in areas or levels that are alien to their specific purposes.<sup>6</sup>

In short, neighborhood councils and other community associations were not to “degrade” their civic purpose by getting involved in issues that did not concern them—i.e. political issues and questions of national economic and social policy. In the ideology of the

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<sup>5</sup>Speech given by General Pinochet at the opening of the “Primera Reunion Nacional de Dirigentes Vecinales” October 25, 1982

<sup>6</sup>Ministerio del Interior 1982. “Sistemas y Cauces de Participacion de la Comunidad en los Municipios” Santiago

dictatorship, “politics” was uncivic and unpatriotic. Politics and civic behavior were incompatible with each other. Instead, participation should be limited to solving practical local problems.

In this framework, the role of the councils was to be limited to that of a supplicant petitioner vis a vis the municipality. Further, the purview of neighborhood councils was to be extremely localized, and limited to the tangible concerns of the immediate territorial unit (*unidad vecinal*) that was under their jurisdiction. What the regime sought to exorcise from these organizations, then, was their historical legacy as a subaltern counterpublic, as a space for politicized collective action. In short, associational life and the social capital that is created through associations would be mobilized in support of the authoritarian project. These community structures remained largely in place until after the formal transition. Most neighborhood councils continued to be led by those who had been appointed during the dictatorship.

### **The Movement for the Democratization of Neighborhood Councils**

Toward the end of 1988, after the “yes-no” plebiscite, which the opposition “No” coalition won, leaders of the popular movements that had opposed the regime began to seek ways to articulate the informal organizations that were created on the margins of the dictatorship to more traditional formal organizations, such as neighborhood councils. They demanded the democratization of the neighborhood councils and the entire structure of formal community associations and municipal government, which were in the hands of Pinochet loyalists. In particular, they sought to turn the councils into what they had been at one time: a center for political mobilization and popular protagonism.

These demands were in part driven by the realization that the transition at the national level was taking a direction that was leaving popular movements on the margins of the process. Skepticism about the role that popular organizations would play in the post-transition was being fueled by the realization that demands for greater participation in decisionmaking were not being given much consideration by the *concertacion*. This



perception was expressed in several documents written by movement leaders that were published in the official publications of NGOs, which served as a kind of voice for popular movement leaders.<sup>7</sup> From the perception of one grassroots leader, writing in *Cal y Canto*, a publication of ECO (an NGO that supported grassroots organizations and efforts): "The problem of participation has bogged down considerably the possibility of advancing toward greater levels of democratization."<sup>8</sup> That is, participation was becoming marginalized, and popular organizations were increasingly becoming less relevant in the decisionmaking process. This same preoccupation with the diminishing influence of the popular sectors in policymaking was also articulated in official publications of the labor movement. The end of the transition and the period immediately following the *concertacion*'s official taking of power, in short, was seen as a potentially dangerous time for popular social movements.

During the final stages of the transition, movement leaders were marginalized from the process and became less relevant in decisionmaking. The final phase of the transition, then, marks a period of disengagement and disarticulation between political elites in the *concertacion* and grassroots movement leaders. This process of disengagement was recognized even by movement leaders who were supporters of the *concertacion*. As the leader of Movimiento Poblacional Solidaridad (MPS), an umbrella organization that was staunchly loyal to the Christian Democratic party, put it:

We realized that the politicians were closing their doors on us. You could see it everywhere. They stopped coming to the *pobla*, they had no time for us anymore, instead of listening to you personally, they told you to fill out a petition and leave it with a secretary. The changes were obvious to everyone in the movement...*Dece* (PDC), Communists, Socialists, and PPDistas.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See, for example, ECO 1989. "En Busca de la Participacion Protagonica" *Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales* 5, Santiago December 1989

<sup>8</sup>ECO 1994. "La Participacion Social En Tiempos de Transicion" *Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales* 7, Santiago December 1990 p.4

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Mercedes Yanez, president of the Movimiento Poblacional Solidaridad (MPS). May 1998.

These, then, were the unmistakable signs of disengagement and the development of a separate sphere of action for elites that was more insulated from popular pressure.

Democratization and empowerment of the neighborhood councils and other formally recognized community organizations was seen by movement leaders as a way to provide popular movements with a formally (i.e. legally) recognized space through which to act and project influence at the local (and national) level. Some movement leaders believed that acting within the context of formal organizations that had legal standing would carry more leverage with the municipality and the state. They also recognized that leaving the neighborhood councils and other formal organizations in the hands of Pinochet loyalists would create a situation in which their organizations would have to compete with the councils for access to municipal government. With a Pinochetista mayor in power, it became obvious who would have the advantage in terms of access.

Popular movements developed a multi-dimensional strategy that was designed to pressure political elites to recognize *poblador* demands and recognize popular organizations: (1) They moved to oppose and resist the privatization drive that took place in the waning days of the Pinochet regime. In the final months of the dictatorship, Pinochet and his economic policymaking team had accelerated the privatization of state owned companies in order to privatize as much of the economy as possible before the *concertacion* took power. Popular movement leaders joined labor movement leaders in opposing and mobilizing against these privatizations, fearing that they would result in loss of jobs.

(2) Second, movement leaders demanded more access to the *concertacion* leadership. Popular movements and NGOs that supported them organized public meetings, conferences, and seminars in which the growing distance between political leaders and movement leaders was highlighted. Leaders of social movement organizations used the opposition media, particularly the popular opposition newspaper *Fortín Mapocho*, to publicize their demands. To make their case with the *concertacion*, they used the

democratic language of the *concertacion* to show that in distancing themselves from popular movements, the political leadership of the *concertacion* was not practicing the democracy that they articulated in their rhetoric.

(3) A third strategy was to organize marches and demonstrations to put important social issues on the agenda (land seizures, protests, marches, occupying public buildings, etc.). In addition, economic pressure was used against the municipality through economic boycotts of municipalities.<sup>10</sup> Several hunger marches and land seizures took place at the end of the transition that were highly publicized.

Most importantly, however, in order to establish a presence in municipal government, popular movements mobilized to democratize the neighborhood councils. Between October and December 1989, 160 neighborhood councils in Santiago were democratized by the National Commission of Democratic Neighborhood Councils, an umbrella organization that represented *poblador* organizations seeking to democratize the councils. By the end of 1989, there were also another 400 that were in the process of being democratized.<sup>11</sup> Following the actual transition in March, 1990, the pace of neighborhood council democratization accelerated.

Many mayors and municipal officials that had been appointed by the dictatorship--and who would remain in office until the mid 1990s--were opposed to these democratization efforts, fearing that they would become the basis for pressure on municipal governments. They also feared that the democratized neighborhood councils, which in many cases were controlled by communists and other forces of the left, would make the municipalities ungovernable. More importantly, as it became increasingly clear that municipal offices would be democratized, mayors who had been appointed by the dictatorship sought to use the neighborhood councils to build a base of support for

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<sup>10</sup>ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Fortin Mapocho December 10, 1989

upcoming elections. Initially, some mayors refused to recognize the new leaders of the councils, and attempted to create new parallel organizations and fill them with loyal supporters to undermine popular movements. Mayors took advantage of laws that allowed for the formation of more than one neighborhood council per territorial unit to encourage their supporters to form rival organizations, thus atomizing the councils. Eventually, however, many mayors acquiesced and recognized the new council leadership and sought ways to work with them. While there were some mayors who had been appointed by the Aylwin government that were more accommodating to the demands of these organizations, as a general rule municipal governments sought ways to limit and constrain the actions of popular movements.<sup>12</sup>

Since during the dictatorship, the leaders of councils had been appointed by the dictatorship, the first step in the democratization of neighborhood councils was to organize elections for new leaders. With the logistical support of NGOs--some of which were affiliated with the *concertacion*, and some of which were affiliated with the more orthodox left--and umbrella organizations like CUP, METRO, and MPS, grassroots organizations in the *poblaciones* organized elections for council leadership positions. These elections were generally well organized and fair, which testifies to a general respect for the democratic process in the *poblaciones*. It must be recalled that prior to 1973, Chile had a long standing democratic tradition that had become a part of the political culture.

Each candidate for a leadership position in the councils was given a hearing at community meetings to expose his or her views, and ballots were secret. The results were counted and tabulated by representatives from all political sectors (including right wing parties that had supported the dictatorship). Votes cast for leadership positions were partially based on party affiliation: that is, communists voted for the communist candidate,

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<sup>12</sup>Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales July 1990 Santiago

Christian Democrats voted for the PDC candidate, and so forth. Other factors, however, were also important: many people were elected to council leadership positions because of their actions in support of their *poblacion* during the dictatorship. Many people who voted for Luzmenia in her *poblacion* were not supporters of the communist party, but voted for her because she was seen as a “*mujer de lucha*” (a woman of struggle), meaning that she was seen as a person who would fight for her community. Luzmenia was elected president of the Union of Neighborhood Councils of Huechuraba for similar reasons--she was seen by other council leaders as tough and willing to stand up to and confront municipal officials. In several *poblaciones*, communists and representatives of MIR (movement for the revolutionary left) were elected to leadership positions despite the fact that in general presidential and congressional elections, these same *poblaciones* generally voted for *concertacion* candidates.

The effort to democratize the neighborhood councils, however, went beyond merely organizing elections for the leadership positions in these organizations. In the context of the democratization of the neighborhood councils and other community structures, a struggle unfolded between grassroots movement leaders and political elites that was centered around a conflict over the meaning of democracy and popular participation: at the core of this conflict was the role that popular social movements and community associations would play in local government and in post-transition democracy. That is, the democratization of the councils revealed a discursive schism that pitted *concertacion* leaders and their supporters at the grassroots level, against more radical movement leaders--some of whom were also supporters of the *concertacion*--but who saw democracy in more expansive terms, over the role that popular participation would play in the post-transition.

This difference in the understanding of the role that popular organizations would play in post-transition government was, however, ultimately rooted in fundamental differences over the meaning of democracy. The *concertacion* was using the language of

democracy in the context of a largely Schumpeterian, procedural version of democracy--a polyarchy where the role played by popular organizations is more limited and circumscribed. By contrast, many grassroots organizational leaders from very divergent political backgrounds--communists, socialists, as well as Christian Democrats--understood and operationalized the same idiom to imagine democracy in much more substantive terms, where the role played by grassroots organizations was much more substantial. Many of these leaders had acquired considerable experience in managing their own internal affairs during the dictatorship and their understanding of the role of the citizen in a democracy was broader than that which the *concertacion* was willing to concede.

The process of democratizing the neighborhood councils created a local space in which a popular public sphere could emerge, where the *pasaje* could engage in public debate and conversations about these issues, and where these differences could be revealed. At the meetings and gatherings that took place in the community centers of many *poblaciones* to organize council elections and to develop strategies for action vis a vis the municipalities, people from different political tendencies--*concertacion*, communist--engaged in a public debate about the role of the neighborhood councils, and about many other issues. These debates and discussions reveal the understandings of democracy and participation that grassroots activists shared and how these differed with political elites.

In the euphoria following the victory of the *concertacion* in the December 1989 presidential elections, in different municipalities, Committees for the Democratization of Neighborhood Councils (*Comite Democratizador de Juntas de Vecinos*)--also known as *Comandos Comunales*--were formed by the leaders of popular movements to organize and coordinate the process of democratizing the neighborhood councils of the municipality. In Huechuraba, Luzmenia and the leaders of Huechuraba's network of *poblador* movement organizations formed a *Comando Comunal* that assigned itself the task of redemocratizing the councils. Many of those who led the *Comando* saw the

redemocratization of the councils and other community associations as an important first step in building popular power from below in the post-transition. They were taking the rhetoric of the *concertacion* concerning popular participation seriously and acting to be establish a role for popular organizations. *Comando* leaders held town meetings (*cabildos*) in several of the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba, urging the residents to "take back their neighborhood council from the dictatorship." They saw the neighborhood councils as a space from within which to articulate demands and mobilize collective action. The leaders of the *comando* also organized a campaign to build linkages to grassroots associations in the community and to provide support to other grassroots organizations. Leaders of the *comandos* viewed the neighborhood councils as a local umbrella organization that could link together all of the organizations in the community to forge a local popular movement capable of carving out a space for themselves in the municipality.

The democratic council movement in Huechuraba (and in other municipalities and *poblaciones*) was linked to and supported by several umbrella organizations of the *poblador* movement: METRO, *Solidaridad*, *Pobladores Unidos*, and the National Commission of Democratic Neighborhood Councils, all were involved in supporting the movement to democratize the councils. Thus, the drive to democratize the councils was led by a diverse array of groups that were aligned to a wide spectrum of political parties. It was not simply an effort of the left. In 1989, these organizations created the *Concertacion Nacional de Organizaciones Poblacionales* (National Concert of Shantytown Organizations). The stated objective was to build one broad *poblador* movement that would play an important role in shaping social policy:

We have determined to work together to confront the problems and needs of the *pobladores*. Moreover, there is consensus on speaking with one voice because misery and marginalization have no ideology or religious creed.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>ECO 1989. "La Democratizacion de la Base: Movimiento Poblacional y Gobierno Local" Santiago:

Underneath this umbrella of unity, however, there were different understandings of democracy and popular participation. That is, while they could agree that the transition had left a democracy in place that was inadequate, the democracy that these different factions envisioned in its place differed in many respects.

By the end of the transition, the leaders of CUP and METRO, as well as other *pobaldor* organizations, had come to the realization that the transition to democracy had been drastically incomplete because it left the neoliberal economic model intact and did not undermine the provisions of the 1980 constitution, which placed “structural limitations on the development of social movements.”<sup>14</sup> They also had come to the realization that in the post-transition period the terms of popular struggle would be dramatically different. Popular collective action would now have to be waged in the municipalities and in the *poblaciones*, where those who had been marginalized by neoliberal structural adjustment resided. In 1989-90, METRO leaders organized a series of seminars that dealt with the dilemmas and the questions of popular grassroots participation and democracy in municipalities. At these meetings, the leaders of METRO stressed that participation in municipal government should lead to the development of a “new hegemony at the base” where community organizations would in effect act as a quasi-government in the *poblaciones* and act to pressure on the municipalities for major concessions.<sup>15</sup> In short, the councils should have major influence in the decisions made by the municipality, and should exercise a species of veto power over municipal actions. One of the underlying goals of the more radical faction in this movement was to colonize formal organizations and use these spaces to turn popular movements and municipal politics into the site of a prolonged struggle oriented toward obviating, undermining, and bypassing the

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ECO

<sup>14</sup>ibid.

<sup>15</sup>ICAL 1991. “Hacia La Construcción de Un Poder Comunal Democrático” Santiago: Taller de Estudios Municipales ICAL



authoritarian enclaves left behind by the dictatorship.<sup>16</sup> Grassroots organizations and movements were envisioned by METRO and CUP leaders as leading to the creation of a space that would turn them into, in effect, a local government which could become the nucleus of grassroots popular power. This vision carried within it counterhegemonic implications because it took power out of the hands of municipal governments and placed it in the hands of the *pobladores*. At the heart of this network of organizations was the neighborhood council.

METRO leaders, in short, wanted the neighborhood councils to become a space for organizing and mobilizing counter-hegemonic struggles from the base (which reveals the influence that Antonio Gramsci's thinking has had on the thinking of many in the Chilean left, and how this influence has reached grassroots organizations). As one communist party official, who in 1990 was a member of METRO, put it:

Neighborhood councils should play a role similar to the Factory Councils in Turin in the 1920s. We believed that we could build popular hegemony from below. The councils would become like the factory councils in the communities and the *poblaciones*.<sup>17</sup>

NGOs that supported popular movements and their efforts (such as ECO and ICAL) saw this period as a critical juncture that was unfolding primarily at the local level:

It is a time, in any case, for strategic adjustments for the organized *pobladores*, and it is important to choose and define clearly the most propitious path to advance democracy from the base, from within local territorial spaces of the community.<sup>18</sup>

The language of these statements--i.e. of participating within local spaces such as the municipality--fits within the general framework of the *concertacion*'s democratic rhetoric. Such statements, however, can be interpreted in different ways to mean different things. To "advance democracy from the base," could mean different things to different groups:

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<sup>16</sup>ICAL 1991. "Hacia La Construccion de Un Poder Comunal Democratico" Santiago: Taller de Estudios Municipales ICAL May

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Juan Gonzalez, communist party director of the Movimiento Poblador

<sup>18</sup>ECO 1989. "La Democracia en la Base: Movimiento Poblacional y Gobierno Local" Santiago

to political leaders in the *concertacion* and their supporters at the local level, it meant giving grassroots organizations some space so that they could have a voice in local government. Thus, in this context, it would mean a form of participation where citizens had limited influence over a small range of issues. To radicalized grassroots organizations, by contrast, it meant that they would be, in effect, *the government of the poblacion*. The difference in these two interpretations of democracy is significant: one vision fits in with the general model of procedural democracy, where citizens have a limited role in government, but where there is a bifurcation of the people and policymakers. The radicalized understanding, by contrast, vests power more directly in the hands of the people. One vision, in short, is consistent with weak publics--where there is less emphasis on decisionmaking--and one vision is consistent with strong publics--where people have a much greater and more direct role in decisionmaking.<sup>19</sup>

Conquest of the councils and the municipalities was seen by some movement leaders as a vehicle for organizing a radicalized version of democracy from below. Thus, it was seen as a way of organizing counter-hegemony and undermining the neoliberal model from below. METRO leaders envisioned the neighborhood councils playing a role as a secondary association that would link together at the level of the *comuna* all of the grassroots organizations that had emerged in the 1980s. Thus, the councils would include soup kitchens, housing committees, health care committees, women's centers, etc.

The councils were also envisioned as articulating the demands of the *pobladores* as a recognized social actor at the national level (much like organized labor is recognized as representing the interests of the working class vis a vis capital). In Huechuraba and other municipalities, CUP and METRO distributed leaflets urging citizens to participate and

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<sup>19</sup>Fraser, Nancy 1997. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Calhoun, Craig (editor) Cambridge: MIT Press

build community democracy, to “organize *cabildos comunales* (town meetings) and popular councils” and to reject the 1980 constitution.

How extensive was this vision of democracy within the *cabildos*? That is, it could be that most of the *cabildo* leaders were simply organizing to demand a few concessions from the state, and that once those concessions were granted they would simply demobilize. There was certainly a contingent of organizational leaders who had more limited objectives and understandings of democracy. Nevertheless, experiences in popular organizations during the dictatorship provided important lessons in grassroots democracy. Many of the grassroots movement leaders--many of whom were supporters of the *concertacion*--had developed a new consciousness during this period that was a complex synthesis of pre-1973 and post-1973 experiences. The experience of organizing to resist the dictatorship was empowering, and was an exercise in self-government.

Too, many grassroots activists who were supporters of the *concertacion* viewed the process of democratization through a different conceptual framework than did the elites who were leading the process. That is, the elites who were leading the *concertacion* had not shared the same experiences as their grassroots supporters. As a socialist activist in Huechuraba who participated in the *cabildos* of the early 1990s put it:

While they (the party leaders) were in Europe and the US leading a comfortable life, we were here dealing with *Pinocho* and his *tiras* and with the misery and poverty that his neoliberalism gave us...they came back very different than what we had expected. In many ways they don't understand our struggle.<sup>20</sup>

There are also surveys that suggest that fairly substantial majorities of the leaders and participants within the neighborhood councils and the *cabildos* saw the neighborhood councils playing a major role in municipal politics that went well beyond the role envisioned by the 1980 constitution and the role that they actually play. That is, their conceptualization of democracy and the role played by citizens in public affairs was in

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<sup>20</sup>Interview with socialist activist in Huechuraba, November 1999

many ways different from what the *concertacion* has actually put in place. In a study of the municipality of Conchali, a survey of council leaders in 1991 found that 84% (21 out of 25) of the council leaders of the municipality wanted the neighborhood councils to become a type of municipal congress that would be empowered to decide important municipal issues.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the institutions for citizen participation that were set up by the dictatorship--the so-called community development councils (CODECOs)--were widely perceived as illegitimate and as instruments of social control. One of the demands that was consistently articulated by *poblador* umbrella organizations from across the political spectrum was for a much greater role in decisionmaking. Seminars organized by NGOs, such as ECO and ICAL, also noted that there was a consensus that popular organizations should seek "a role as a protagonist in municipal affairs" through neighborhood councils and other organizations.

According to the leadership of the *cabildos*, the councils should become, in effect, a local government, and would be empowered with decisionmaking capabilities and jurisdiction over important issues. These demands posed a challenge to the framework of local politics and "protected democracy" left in place by the dictatorship. To support their arguments and claims, these leaders appropriated the very language of the *concertacion* to construct a model of popular democracy that was based upon popular sovereignty at the base. There was, then, a demand for real and meaningful participation in government, at the municipal and national levels.

In Huechuraba's *poblaciones* (*La Pincoya*, *Pablo Neruda*, *Patria Nueva*, *Ultima Hora*), the first council meetings to be held following the presidential elections were attended by large numbers of people. The democratization of the councils seemed to capture a moment of liberation, and came to symbolize the expulsion of the dictatorship

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<sup>21</sup>ECO "Participar en la Comuna Una Consulta a Juntas de Vecinos de la Comuna de Conchali" Santiago October 1991 (Unpublished Document)

from the *pasaje*. Signs proclaiming the *poblaciones* in Huechuraba to be “free and democratic territory” (*territorio libre y democratico*) were hung on the entrance of council halls that had been democratized. In the final stages of the transition, the halls in which the councils met also acquired an aura of self-government, and the experience of actually ousting the appointed leaders of the councils—who had been selected by the dictatorship—was empowering. People in many *poblaciones* rallied around the neighborhood councils to show their scorn for municipal officials that had been appointed by the regime. Leaflets urging civil disobedience were distributed in some *poblaciones*. Meetings would often flow out onto the streets of many of the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba. Many residents in Huechuraba became regular members (*socios*) of their neighborhood councils and supported the councils by paying monthly dues and participating in council activities.

The neighborhood councils and the committees, *cabildos* and commissions that they organized became platforms for community mobilization around issues that concerned social citizenship rights: health care, housing, and community development were among the most prominent. Shortly after the councils were democratized, the municipality of Huechuraba found itself swamped by a wave of petitions demanding government action on a variety of issues: infrastructure, garbage collection, improvements in the health care clinic, better schools, etc.<sup>22</sup> The *oficina de partes* (the office of petitions), where these petitions are received and processed found themselves overwhelmed. Municipal offices that deal with community organizations found themselves overwhelmed with demands from mobilized community organizations that were taking seriously the *concertacion*’s democratic rhetoric. Filling out petitions—the preferred mode of citizenship in the elite imaginary—was turned into a strategy of resistance by the radicalized sector of the council movement. As Luzmenia put it: “They

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with municipal official July 1998

wanted us to petition for things, so we gave them petitions. (*Querian peticiones los conchas de su madre, ahí tienen peticiones...*)” Thus, a local war of position began to unfold on the terrain of supplicant participation. These varied forms of pressure on the municipalities did yield some results: some municipalities put pressure on the state for increases in funds for social programs in order to satisfy the demands placed on them by the *cabildos* and the councils. That is, some of the demands that were swamping the municipalities found their way into the Moneda (the presidential palace).

In Huechuraba, council leaders also began to publicly pronounce themselves on sensitive issues of human rights and justice for the victims of repression; a subject which had been taboo for grassroots movements, and which had the potential to become contentious. This was a direct challenge to one of the most conflict laden issues--an issue that had been reserved to secret elite negotiations--and was a direct affront to the military. The Union of Neighborhood Councils pronounced itself, demanding trial and punishment for Pinochet. The Union also printed a list of reasons why he must be punished. Most of the reasons that were given were local. For example, among the reasons was “that he (Pinochet) had your house ransacked in the cold winter night, and he took your loved ones to the soccer field of your *pobla*, and because he had several of our *vecinos* killed.” In *La Pincoya*, *Pablo Neruda*, *Patria Nueva*, and *Ultima Hora*, the repression was not just a distant rumor or the subject of sterile legal debates, it was real, palpable, and humiliating in the absolute paralysis and fear that it generated. It took the form of disappearances in the middle of the night, of trucks filled with soldiers surrounding the *pobla* and kicking doors in and ransacking homes in the middle of the night, of people being dragged out to soccer fields and disappearing. The *poblaciones* of Huechuraba were one of the sites where the *pueblo* felt the repression, not by reading it, but by experiencing it in the most private of spaces--their homes.

Most prominent on the agenda of many of these first *cabildos*, however, was the question of social and economic rights (i.e. the social question)--an issue which according

to the limited democracy envisioned by elites was beyond the purview of community organizations. Committees focused on social questions--housing, health care, education, and social security. In Huechuraba, the councils that made up the *Comando* also focused much of their effort on the issue of social and economic rights. A "Democratized Council Group" (*Agrupacion de Juntas de Vecino Democratizadas*) was formed by the councils of *La Pincoya*, *Patria Nueva*, and *Pablo Neruda* to organize plans for community development and to address pressing problems that were facing *pobladores* in Huechuraba. This group was comprised of a coalition of community leaders from different political parties of the *concertacion* and the communist party that attempted to work together on issues that they could agree upon. Representatives from councils that had not yet been democratized were excluded from participation.

One of the most urgent problems in Huechuraba was the issue of housing debt (*deuda habitacional*) and the expansion of public housing programs to alleviate overcrowding. Many residents of Huechuraba were facing eviction from their government subsidized homes because they could not pay their monthly payments to the ministry of housing (SERVIU). Indeed, debt was once again emerging to become an important issue, as it was estimated that as many as 25% of those living in subsidized housing were severely in arrears. In other popular municipalities many people were also facing the problem of housing debt, so at the national congress of neighborhood councils, the National Commission of Housing Debtors (*Comision Nacional de Deudores Habitacionales*--CONADE) was created with the objective of dealing with the debt question. Together with the national congress of democratized neighborhood councils, they were able to pressure the Aylwin government into issuing a decree that forgave most of the outstanding housing debt of *pobladores* in Santiago.

Many others faced an acute problem of overcrowding in their homes. In Huechuraba, several committees of the homeless and the arrived (*allegados*) also carried out a land invasion on a small vacant patch of land that was on the periphery of *poblacion*

Pablo Neruda which was tacitly tolerated by the *concertacion* and by the municipality. The land invasion in Huechuraba was part of a larger series of land invasions that took place in popular sector municipalities (*La Pintana--Poblacion Salvador Dali*, and *La Cisterna*) to pressure the *concertacion* to make concessions on the issue of the housing deficit and social issues. In short, in the immediate period after the transition, it seemed as if the councils were in the process of emerging to become a force in the local political arena. They were taking seriously the democratic language of the *concertacion*, and using this language to articulate claims that amounted to an expansion of citizenship rights. It was a moment in the transition when there seemed to be a possibility for a deepening of democracy through the actions and pressure of the councils.

### **Imagining Democracy in the *Cabildos* and the *Pasaje***

Committees, neighborhood councils, and *cabildos* also became spaces for politicized debate and discussion that centered around the role of neighborhood councils and popular movements in post-transition democracy. Out of these discussions and deliberations came a more general discussion about democracy and the citizen's role in democratic governance from which can be gleaned a "democratic imaginary." The practices of the councils during this early period also shaped popular understandings of democracy. In this debate and in the actions that they took, the experiences that they had acquired in organizing and in internal self-government during the 1960s and 70s, and during the dictatorship proved to be invaluable in shaping their understanding of the role of popular organizations. That is, popular understandings of democracy were filtered through the prism of the collective experiences in building the *pasaje* and in dealing with the dilemmas of the dictatorship. Leaders of grassroots organizations incorporated the lessons in democracy and popular participation that they had learned through their experiences with popular movements to appropriate the democratic narrative that was being advanced by the *concertacion* and reinterpret its meaning in ways that were in many ways at odds with the way that elites in the *concertacion* had intended.



First, this understanding of democracy placed a premium on collective rights as opposed to individual rights. The central focus of the *cabildos* on recovering basic social rights that existed in the pre-1973 era shows that this understanding of democracy had a strong social component as well. That is, democracy was understood to be a system of government that guarantees basic social citizenship rights--i.e. basic claims to economic subsistence and social existence that is ensured and that is independent of the market. As Jorge Lincoleo, one of the leaders at a national congress of democratizing committees that took place in 1990, put it at a meeting of the congress: "We understood that there was no democracy if there was not a substantive advance in the recuperation of our social and economic rights. Participation should be oriented toward recovering our rights."<sup>23</sup> Democracy, in short, is inconceivable without addressing the question of economic and social rights. The understanding of these rights was anchored in what could be called a "moral economy" of democracy--a popular consensus concerning social norms and obligations, and of the proper economic functions of different actors (the state, economic elites).<sup>24</sup>

In the popular democratic imaginary, the state has been understood to be on the side of the *pueblo*: democracy is imagined as a system of government where the state shields the *pueblo* from the harsher effects of the neoliberal market. This imaginary began to crystallize, as historian Thomas Klubock documents, in the 1930s during the Popular Front era.<sup>25</sup> The relationship between subordinate classes and the state came to be imagined "in terms of a series of perceived rights and guarantees"<sup>26</sup> that were articulated by political parties of the left and center-left. This imaginary can be seen in the way that

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<sup>23</sup>Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales No.7 December 1990 Santiago: ECO

<sup>24</sup>Thompson, E.P. 1993. *Customs in Common Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* New York: The Free Press

<sup>25</sup>Miller Klubock, Thomas 1998. *Contested Communities Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* Durham: Duke University Press

<sup>26</sup>ibid. p.104

the opposition to the privatization of industries that took place in the waning months of the dictatorship was framed--privatization was seen as taking property away from the *pueblo* (the state) and giving it back to the rich. This conceptualization of privatization underscores an understanding of the state as a space for the *pueblo*. "Equality"--a key term in all democratic narratives--was understood in economic and material terms as well as political and civil terms. This material dimension of democracy is a pillar of the democratic imaginary in the *pasaje* that has its roots in the pre-1973 era, and which cuts across party lines: it is a vision that is shared by Christian Democrats, Socialists, and Communists.

During the 1960s and 70s, many leaders had learned how to manage the affairs of the community--indeed, in many cases they had built the community--and how to mobilize to pressure on political elites through political parties and the state to demand solutions to their problems. In short, they had learned critical citizenship skills, especially the importance of organization and collective action. During the latter 1970s and early 80s, they had learned how to use these skills to organize autonomously of political elites. The experience in organizing clandestinely in the absence of significant support from political elites had taught valuable lessons in self-organization and self-government.<sup>27</sup> The lessons learned in the late 1960s, early 1970s, and 1980s were synthesized and incorporated into their understanding of democracy as more than the act of voting. Participation was seen as an activity where they--the *pobladores*--would play a protagonic role in deciding issues that concerned them. That is, they imagined themselves as a strong public.

The language of "civil society" was appropriated and radicalized by some leaders to produce an understanding of the role of civil society that was at odds with *concertacion* elites. The objective of many grassroots leaders became to use civil society as an

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<sup>27</sup>Oxhorn, Philip 1995. *Organizing Civil Society The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile* Pennsylvania State University Press

instrument to advance democracy from the base, from within local, spaces. That is, if the elite led transition was producing a democracy where popular sector groups would be largely marginalized from power, then, the solution was to act from within the spaces where subordinated groups were empowered to act and to promote democracy from these spaces. Thus, aside from merely organizing formal elections to elect leaders of the councils, and pressuring the *concertacion* for material concessions, the *cabildos* were also a space for deliberation and reflection concerning the role of the councils (and other grassroots organizations) in democracy.<sup>28</sup> For a brief instant in time during the final stages of the transition and during the period immediately following the transition the *cabildos comunales*, the neighborhood councils, and the community centers where they met became spaces that housed a subaltern counterpublic--i.e. "discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."<sup>29</sup> *Cabildos* became spaces where people explored the meaning of, and the limitations of, post-transition democracy through a debate that was centered around two elements that are crucial to the way in which democracy is defined: social citizenship rights--i.e. the material rights of citizenship--and participation rights.

Some grassroots leaders appropriated terms like "democracy," "citizenship," and "participation" and defined them in their own way by radicalizing the *concertacion*'s own language. Out of these discussions and debates emerged reinterpreted understandings of the Tocquevillian model of democracy that was being implemented by the *concertacion*. There was, then, a brief moment when people tested the waters of post-transition democracy through local town hall meetings, national encounters of the homeless and the poor to demand housing and health care rights, and other forms of popular expression that

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<sup>28</sup>ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Fraser, 1997 op.cit. p.123

were taking place in the *poblaciones*.<sup>30</sup> The councils became a space in which popular sector communities came together to discuss important political issues and to attempt to define their role in the new democracy. The actions taken by leaders of the *cabildos* represent an attempt to expand the role of the councils into areas that went beyond the role assigned to them in the 1980 constitution. It was a moment when popular movements were adapting to the new institutionality created by the transition process, and trying to create more space for popular participation.

Thus, when in a speech in 1991, president Patricio Aylwin referred to Abraham Lincoln's famous conceptualization of democracy as "government for the people, by the people, and of the people", the *pobladores* that were organizing the *cabildos comunales* took the idea of government for, of, and by the people seriously to mean that they--who after all were the people (*el pueblo*)--would be a protagonist in shaping the post-transition democracy, and in deciding important issues. To many of those who were organizing the *cabildos* and the popular councils, "government for the people, by the people, and of the people" meant that it would actually be the *pueblo* who would govern from below: the *cabildos* and the *councils* would become sites for meaningful popular sovereignty. As Eduardo Walker, one of the leaders of the *Concertacion Nacional de Organizaciones Poblacionales*, put it: "Local government will consist not only of the municipality. Local government will be the community, the *campamentos*, the *poblaciones*, the councils...all should be the government."

This reading of the role of "the people" in local government shows how the liberal democratic imaginary was radicalized: local government will not only consist of the technocrats in the municipality, it will consist of the *pobladores* themselves. In short, the ordinary *poblador* would be empowered to participate in public decisionmaking. This vision of democracy, where the people actually decide what is to be done, radicalizes and

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<sup>30</sup>Hechos Urbanos 92 January-February 1990 Santiago: SUR

expands the entire project of the *concertacion*, which hinged on elite decisionmaking in circles that were insulated from the people.

In many cases their understanding of term “the people”—*el pueblo*—differed significantly from the way in which *el pueblo* was conceptualized by political elites. As pointed out in the previous chapter, *pueblo* was a code word to signify the people who had traditionally been excluded from decisionmaking power: the workers, the urban poor, the *campesinos*, and the lower middle classes. Leaders of the *cabildos comunales* appropriated and radicalized the Tocquevillian/liberal democratic language of decentralization and the *concertacion*'s rhetoric of “government closer to the people” to argue and demand that the neighborhood councils should be empowered to act as the “government of the *poblacion*.” The language of decentralization became embedded within a counter-hegemonic imaginary that was democratizing (as opposed to the language of decentralization used by the dictatorship that defined it as a vehicle for greater administrative efficiency). To many of those who were participating in the *cabildos* and *comandos*, decentralization meant that they, the people (*el pueblo*), would have the power to make the decisions, and to define the agenda. The Tocquevillian language of the *concertacion*, then, was appropriated by some grassroots leaders and articulated to a more radicalized discourse to produce a conceptualization of democracy as government from below--i.e. as government in which the *pueblo* governed directly, in which the *pobladores* sat at the table of power in the municipality and decided what would be on the public agenda. According to Luzmenia, who was a key activist in Huechuraba's *comando comunal*, the neighborhood councils should play a major role in popular communities. They should, in effect, be *the* government:

The *junta de vecino* should be the representative of the *pueblo*, and they should be the government. Isn't that what “government by the people and for the people” means? We understand our needs better than the mayor, who doesn't even live here in Huechuraba. We, the *pobladores*, should make the decisions about our community. The *junta de vecino* should be like it was before...an organization of struggle and the defender of the

people. We built the *poblacion* with our struggle, we should decide things. In articulating this understanding of the role of popular organizations, Luzmenia was drawing on her experiences in participation and collective action in the 1960s, where popular organizations in the *poblaciones* had been crucial in managing the affairs of the community. Her memory of the role played by collective organizations in the construction of the *poblacion* and the role that organizations played in this process influenced and shaped her understanding of democracy. She and other leaders articulated these experiences to the rhetoric of the *concertacion*, and in this manner, the fundamental meaning of the *concertacion*'s understanding of democracy was radically transformed in the imaginary of many popular leaders. Thus, she and others in Huechuraba appropriated the democratic discourse of the *concertacion* in ways that were not intended and that were unanticipated.

Luzmenia envisioned the *junta de vecinos* and other community organizations as, in effect, the government of the community. This understanding of the role of community organizations shaped her views on decentralization and municipalization of social policy. From her perspective decentralization had not been a vehicle for the deconcentration of power, but instead had, merely been a reconcentration of power at the municipal level. Municipal governments were simply an efficient mechanism for more evenly diffusing the power of the state over the entire surface of society. As Margarita, a community leader in the municipality of Lo Espejo, eloquently put it: "The municipalities are simply the arm of the state in the *comuna*...and are part of the strategy of dividing with the intention of conquering." The growing administrative and political capacity of municipal governments did not, from Luzmenia's perspective, represent a devolution of power to "*el pueblo*." From the perspective of many leaders of popular organizations, the municipality had taken sovereignty away from them.

These "town hall" type of meetings that were taking place in popular communities, then, can be seen as an attempt by grassroots leaders to redefine and expand the

parameters of democracy from below by democratizing key spaces within the formal institutional framework. Viewed from this perspective the *cabildos comunales* can be seen as a space for the appropriation of the rhetoric of the *concertacion* and its articulation to alternative frameworks such that it attempted to expand and deepen the conceptualization of democracy being articulated by the elites of the *concertacion*. Indeed, the *cabildos* exposed several of the fundamental contradictions of liberal democracy: the limited scope of popular participation, and definitions of freedom and equality that in reality served as the underpinning for a highly inequalitarian social order.

The *cabildos comunales* were a more or less regular feature of local politics in many *poblaciones* and municipalities in the immediate wake of the transition as people tentatively and carefully explored the limits of popular participation within the new democracy. What seemed to be germinating in the councils was a low intensity process of contestation--a kind of Gramscian war of position. As discussions turned into the basis for collective aimed at recovering the role of grassroots organizations in the political process and at recovering the rights of "*el pueblo*," a low intensity process of contestation developed in Huechuraba and other communities.

In many municipalities, Huechuraba among them, the *comandos comunales* also became a connective structure that linked the neighborhood councils (and other organizations as well) in an informal, localized expression of a popular movement that mobilized pressure on the government to remove mayors that been appointed during the dictatorship, and who were seen as particularly harsh during the dictatorship. In some instances, they were instrumental in democratizing key spaces within the municipalities that had been bulwarks of the dictatorship until 1990. In neighboring Conchali, neighborhood council leaders democratized the Communal Union of Neighborhood Councils of Conchali by ousting the appointed leadership and holding open elections. METRO and the National Commission of *Pobladores* argued that one of the first steps on the road to democracy was "to force *Pinochetista* mayors from power." METRO argued

that in those municipalities where mayors that were appointed by the dictatorship were still in office, the neighborhood councils should seek “confrontation and the removal of fascist mayors through resistance and public opposition to their continued presence.”<sup>31</sup>

In Huechuraba this process of contestation manifested itself in a wave of contentious collective action: in 1990 and 1991, there were several confrontations between the municipality and community leaders. In 1991, Luzmenia and other leaders of the community organized a health care committee (*comite de salud*) that staged an occupation (*toma*) of the primary care clinic in Huechuraba. *Pobladores* in the *campamentos* of Huechuraba staged protests to demand access to permanent housing. In short, there was a process of mobilization taking place that was expanding the parameters of democracy at the local level.

*Cabildo* leaders, in sum, appropriated the language of democracy and participation on their own terms to attempt to articulate a model of popular democracy that was based upon the moral economy of social citizenship rights of the pre-1973 era and the model of democratic popular participation that had developed within the grassroots movements of the 1980s. The *cabildos comunales* can be seen as an articulation of two discourses: (1) a discourse anchored in pre-1973 notions of popular power that is seen in demands for restoration of social citizenship rights (housing, health care, education, welfare) as fundamental rights of citizenship and (2) the idea of popular participation, democracy, and protagonism that were a result of the experiences in grassroots organizing during the late 1960s and early 70s and during the dictatorship. This concept of participation is seen in demands for the instauration of a radicalized version of participation rights which in many ways challenges the elitist model of democracy that became the hallmark of the transition.

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<sup>31</sup>ICAL 1991. “Hacia La Construcción de Un Poder Comunal Democrático” Santiago: Taller de Estudios Municipales ICAL May



When articulated to each other, these two discourses can be as a synthesis that provides the basis for a model of popular democracy.

The immediate post-transition period, then, was characterized by a process in which popular movements attempted to reconquer key spaces and attempted to empower popular organizations and expand democracy from below by democratizing municipal governments. They also sought to put in practice a model of democracy from below that was an articulation of the experiences of popular organization in the 1980s with a conceptualization of social rights from the pre-neoliberal era. More importantly, they were the bearers of a model of democracy (*democracia popular*) from below that appropriated the language of the *concertacion* and articulated it to pre-1973 conceptualizations of rights that was a threat to the limited democracy that Pinochet's regime had created. This brief period, however, would not last as since then the councils and other popular organizations have atrophied and popular participation has declined. It is to this process that I now turn.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE TWILIGHT OF THE DEMOCRATIC MOMENT: MUNICIPALITIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SUBALTERN COUNTERPUBLICS IN HUECHURABA

#### Introduction

The central paradox of the post-transition period since the brief burst of popular participation in the period immediately following transition has been a decline in popular participation in a time of political opening. The costs of voice and collective action have been lowered--people are encouraged to participate--and yet the voice of popular organizations, community associations, and movements has grown palpably fainter and collective action seems to have become more sporadic and incoherent as the transition became consolidated. A "democratic malaise" has settled in around the *poblaciones* that has fueled a mass exit from collective life and a retreat into private spaces.

Associational life and spaces for popular participation in many of Chile's popular communities have been under pressure from two forces: (1) As discussed in the previous chapter, the growing penetration of commodity culture and a consumer ethos--fueled by a massification of credit mechanisms and the influx of commodities--that has opened a new arena for many residents of popular communities--the sphere of commodities--has been underwriting a cultural transformation in the *poblaciones*. A new space has emerged within the womb of popular communities: the mall, the shopping center, and the megamarket.

(2) Second, however, changes in state-society relations and in the infrastructure of popular civil society have changed the significance and relevance of popular participation in associational life. Specifically, the state has (1) fomented the development of some organizations while undermining the development of others. (2) Second, the process of

“teaching participation” has had effects on popular subjects. These are the subjects of the following chapters.

Since the end of the democratic moment, the face of popular participation in Huechuraba (and in most popular municipalities) has changed significantly. First, what could be called a “participation gap” has emerged. Younger people--i.e. those under thirty years of age--simply do not want to participate in community organizations.<sup>1</sup> The changes taking place among the younger people in the community--the lack of solidarity and the rise of what to them seemed to be a narcissistic culture of individualism and consumerism, have been a source of concern for the older generations in Huechuraba. As Luzmenia put it: “All they care about is consuming...going downtown or to a mall and finding a way to get things. They just care about material things...” In Huechuraba, according to leaders of community organizations, young people no longer seem interested in participation in the collective activities of community associations. This has not only been the case in Huechuraba. Throughout Chile, young people have turned away from political participation. This is reflected in the declining number of people who register to vote when they turn eighteen. This lack of political and community involvement makes it difficult for community leaders to bring pressure to bear on the municipality on important issues. As Luzmenia argued:

The only people who come to meetings anymore are the people who were involved in the *toma*, and even they don't get involved like they used to. If people don't work collectively, the municipality won't even listen to us. The government only listens when they see that people are solidary and organized.

Thus, there is a sharp division between those whose identities were formed during the 1960s and 70s, and those who grew up in the neoliberal era of malls, credit cards, and cable television.

### Changes in State-Society Relations

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<sup>1</sup> Participa 1991 “Los Jovenes y la Política” Serie Documentos de Estudios Santiago

Important to understanding the lack of interest in participation is the changes taking place among those who do participate in associational life. Indeed, if one side of the equation is the increasing accessibility of the market, the other side has to do with changes in the dynamics of the relationship between state and society. Among those who do participate in associational life in Huechuraba, there has been a qualitative shift in the type of organizations in which people participate, and in the internal dynamics of participation. More traditional--and directly political--organizations (neighborhood councils, for example) have declined in importance as people have opted for participation in self-help organizations, such as artisan groups and educational organizations that teach certain skills that prepare people to enter the market economy or that are oriented toward self-achievement.<sup>2</sup>

Since the end of the democratic moment, participation in neighborhood councils in Huechuraba (and elsewhere) has declined steadily. By the end of 1992, the neighborhood councils had become "interlocutors of a municipality that manages its relationship to the councils from a technical perspective which marginalizes the role which they can play."<sup>3</sup> The councils (as well as other grassroots community organizations) had been severely limited in the role that they played in shaping the policies of municipal government. The end of the council movement can be viewed as representing what two scholars have called the third historic defeat of the popular movement.<sup>4</sup> By the beginning of 1993, their role had been for the most part limited to that of supplicant petitioners vis a vis municipal government. The democratizing thrust of the councils and the *cabildos* had lost all momentum, and movement leaders were lamenting that "we wanted great change and instead we got the politics of consensus."

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<sup>2</sup>Interview with the Director of Community Development of Huechuraba, November 1998

<sup>3</sup>Cal y Canto 1992. "Participación y Movimientos Sociales" Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales Santiago

<sup>4</sup>Salazar, Gabriel and Julio Pinto 1998. Historia Contemporánea de Chile I Estado, Legitimidad, Ciudadanía Santiago: LOM Ediciones (the other two defeats: 1973 and 1986)

Participation in Huechuraba's neighborhood councils has declined dramatically. In one of the neighborhood councils that I visited in Huechuraba--Villa Wolf--only 8% of the adult residents of the community participated in the council with any degree of regularity. Luzmenia complains that participation in her neighborhood council has declined dramatically since 1990:

Before, if you called a meeting, the room would be full of people...sometimes we would have to hold the meeting outside to accommodate everyone. Now, you call a meeting and ten people show up if you're lucky. Things have changed and people aren't interested anymore. They know that participation doesn't really mean anything.

Indeed, many residents that I asked did not even know who their council leaders were. Most residents have stopped making monthly contributions to their neighborhood councils. Many of those who had participated in the *cabildos comunales* expressed disillusion with democracy, and saw the outcome as a defeat for the *cabildo* movement.

Furthermore, while surveys have shown an overall decline in participation in all types of organizations, they also reveal a shift in participation away from organizations such as political parties, neighborhood councils, and labor unions and toward self-help and identity based organizations and organizations that seek to integrate people into the marketplace.<sup>5</sup> There has been a shift away from participation in those organizations that pursue what could be called "public material goods" in the political arena (such as neighborhood councils and housing committees) to organizations that seek some type of identity or status based good (religious group, women's organization, sports groups, and cultural groups), or that seek some sort of excludable private benefit (small business associations and organizations to train people for entry into the market).

The magnitude of the decline in participation in neighborhood councils can be understood in answers to survey questions that are concerned with the issue of participation in neighborhood councils over time. Respondents in four *poblaciones* in

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<sup>5</sup>Sabatini, Francisco 1995. *Barrio y Participación Mujeres Pobladoras de Santiago*. Santiago: SUR

Huechuraba were asked about their history of participation in neighborhood councils since the transition.<sup>6</sup> While 61% had participated in the councils in the 1990-1992 period, only 24% of those asked now mentioned any participation in the councils (N=214).

Moreover, among those who still participate, the amount of time and effort that people devote to participating in neighborhood councils has declined. Those who claim to have been participants for the last three years were asked the following question: "Would you say that the amount of time that you devote to participating in your *junta de vecino* has increased, declined, or remained the same over the last three years?"

Table 5-1

Participation in Neighborhood Councils Since Transition

Participation in *junta* has declined: 63%

Participation in *junta* has increased: 3%

Participation in *junta* has not changed: 19% \_\_\_\_\_ (N=93)

Why has this been the case, given that the *concertacion* has stressed citizen participation and involvement in its discourse? The decline in participation in neighborhood councils can be seen as one of the indicators pointing to a general transformation in the overall mode and style of participation in Huechuraba over the last decade. People have turned away from participation in "political" organizations in favor of participation in other types of organizations.

Declines in participation in neighborhood councils also point to a second answer to the question of declining participation: the process of democratic consolidation at the base and the disillusion with democracy and participation that people have experienced through participation in the *polis*. Part of the explanation for this decline in participation also is rooted in the fact that many of the more pressing socioeconomic problems that the neighborhood councils were originally created to deal with have been in some measure addressed by the *concertacion*.

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<sup>6</sup>Random sample of residents of Poblacion Pablo Neruda, Villa Wolf, Poblacion La Pincoya, Poblacion Ultima Hora.

This shift away from participation in neighborhood councils can be explained by several factors:

(1) Disillusion and disappointment that people have experienced with “political” forms of participation since the transition. The steps that the *concertacion* took (and those steps that were not taken) which in effect limited the role of popular organizations served as a catalyst for many participants to “vote with their feet” and exit. In short, there has been a mass exodus from civil society and the public sphere. The councils attempted to play a major role in post-transition democracy and were rebuffed by political elites. The extent of popular sector disappointment and disillusion with public sphere activities (participation in the political arena) is revealed in surveys that show that people feel alienated and distant from the political arena. People were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements:

Table 5-2

Perceptions of Democracy and Government

(1) “Democracy has helped me to solve my problems”:

Agree:	49 (23%)	
Disagree:	165 (77%)	(N=214)

(2) “People in the government listen to people like me”:

Agree:	66 (31%)	
Disagree:	146 (68%)	(N=214)

(3) “How much influence do you feel that you have over the decisions made by the government?”

No Influence:	133 (62%)	
Very Little Influence:	60 (28%)	
Some Influence:	17 (8%)	(N=214)

Indeed, most people in Huechuraba generally felt powerless to influence the government. Frequently heard comments were that the government does not know the needs of the people. Thus, many perceive the government to be distant and removed from their concerns, and that politicians have no connection to their reality. There is a palpable

sense of disillusion with democracy in Huechuraba (and in other municipalities as well). As one woman put it when I asked her about whether democracy had helped her to solve her problems: "We thought democracy was going to be different, but it is the same thing as *Pinocho*...nothing really changed...one *feels defrauded*." This disillusion with democracy and with politics has translated into declining interest in participation. This declining interest in political participation has caused concern among policymakers in the government, who see a strong connection between apathy and disillusion, which they argue was reflected in the 1999 presidential elections when the candidate of the right, Joaquín Lavín, almost won the presidency. Thus, the Lagos government has made "bringing government closer to the people" a priority.<sup>7</sup> The basic dilemma faced by any government that attempts to bring government closer to the people, however, is that fundamental changes will be very difficult to achieve. Globalization and the 1980 constitution make substantive changes highly unlikely.

(2) A second reason for the turn away from "political" participation has been the efforts of the state to channel popular participation into organizations that are less concerned with demanding things from government, and into arenas where the issues being decided have little relevance to broader popular concerns.

One of the primary roles contemplated for the neighborhood councils when they were first created, for example, had been community development. However, most of the *poblaciones* in Huechuraba now have basic infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity. Indeed, 97% of the municipality's roads have been paved, while almost 100% of the homes in Huechuraba have running water and electricity. There is only one small *campamento* on the periphery of Huechuraba that is still without housing. The state's ability to satisfy many basic demands has no doubt had an impact on popular participation.

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<sup>7</sup>Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo 1999. "Diez Años de Democracia y Tres Tareas Pendientes" Santiago: CED



Nevertheless many problems still remain. Many homes in Huechuraba still face the problem of overcrowding. In Luzmenia's *poblacion*, for example, over half of the residents have a second family living with them as "*allegados*," and many even have three families living in one home. Luzmenia has two sons and a daughter, two of whom have families of their own, living with her. She and her husband even built a little shack, made out of flimsy plywood, cardboard, and corrugated tin on the back of her house so that her son and his wife could live there. Throughout the metropolitan area of Santiago, the ministry of housing has estimated that among the poorest 20% of the population, 11.2% of the households live in a situation of "critical overcrowding," while 25% of the low income population lives with some degree of overcrowding.<sup>8</sup>

Although the vast majority of the people of Huechuraba are classified as either low income or poor, in the current institutional structure neighborhood councils are not designed to play a role in ameliorating the problems that such communities must now deal with. Municipalities, which are the primary space for the councils to act, have relatively little control over housing policy. As a woman who had stopped participating in her council, explains:

What can the *junta* do for me? My husband has no work, and must do *pololitos* (odd jobs) to make money to feed the house...how can the *junta* change that? I don't see the *junta* or any of the other organizations doing anything that really deals with our problems....

The disconnect between what the government is actually doing and the actual demands of the *pobladores* is another factor that has fueled exit. The woman that made these comments had a viable house and had all the necessary basic infrastructure (electricity, water, etc.). Thus, one dimension of the problem is that the neighborhood councils have yet to find a long term role in the post-transition.

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<sup>8</sup>Ministerio de Vivienda y Urbanización 1996. *Focalización en La Vivienda Social*. Santiago: MINVU

Part of this inability to find a role is linked to the process of decentralization: the role of the councils is primarily vis a vis municipal government, and municipal governments have little capacity to address the problem articulated by this woman: unemployment and poverty in a neoliberal economy. Municipal governments have little control over problems of poverty, unemployment, income distribution--i.e. structural problems. These types of questions are more of a national level problem, where neighborhood councils and other grassroots organizations have little influence because there are no viable secondary organizations that can articulate interests on a national level.

### **The Dynamics of Demobilization**

A critical factor, too, has been the efforts of the municipality (and the state) to demobilize and marginalize the neighborhood councils, which were seen as potential challengers to municipal authority, in the name of stability and order. In part, the efforts of municipal governments to minimize and constrain the role played by neighborhood councils have deep historical roots. Since they were first established as a corporate actor in the 1960s, neighborhood councils have historically been seen by municipal officials as a potential threat. When the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-70) first created and recognized the neighborhood councils in 1968, municipal governments viewed the councils and the organizational privileges with which they were endowed as a threat to the already limited powers of municipal governments.<sup>9</sup> The National Confederation of Municipalities (CONAM) strongly opposed the attempts of the Frei government to give legal recognition to the councils.<sup>10</sup> In the 1960s and 70s, moreover, leaders of neighborhood councils often emerged to become political figures and to challenge municipal authorities. Thus, municipal governments have always seen neighborhood

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<sup>9</sup>Asociacion Chilena de Municipalidades 1968 Boletin de la AChM Santiago

<sup>10</sup>Salazar, Gabriel and Jorge Benitez 1997. *Autonomia, Espacio y Gestion El Municipio Cercenado* Santiago: LOM Ediciones

councils as a potential challenger for power in the *comuna*, and sought to limit and constrain their actions.<sup>11</sup>

The process of limiting, constraining, and channeling the role of the popular movements in post-authoritarian institutions began with visits to the *poblaciones* by elite leaders of the *concertacion*. The political leadership of the *concertacion* was dominated by moderates who sought to rein in grassroots associations in order to promote an image of stability and tranquillity. They saw the radical language of many of the *cabildos comunales* as a potential source of instability. Shortly after the transition, key leaders within the *concertacion* began visiting the *cabildos comunales* and neighborhood councils, urging people to be patient, and to refrain from actions that could potentially destabilize democracy. Indeed, a consistent theme of *concertacion* leaders has been that mobilization and protest threaten to undermine a fragile democracy. At these meetings, people were reminded of the potential consequences of instability--a subtle reference to the potential for a return to authoritarian rule. *Concertacion* leaders adopted a strategy of defusing potential protest by promising people that many of their demands would be addressed. As we saw earlier, they also took concrete steps to increase spending on social programs. In short, officials engaged in a campaign designed to persuade people to play by the rules by making partial concessions on some of the social demands made by popular movements. However, they would not make any significant concessions concerning the democratizing demands of the *cabildos* and *consejos*. This has shaped the tenor of decentralization and local government for the last decade.

A second response employed in many municipalities was to build opposition and sow division within the *cabildo* leadership by supporting candidates for leadership positions in the councils who would be more amenable to the *concertacion*'s conceptualization of the role of grassroots organizations. Organizations like

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<sup>11</sup>This point came out in several interviews with municipal officials and with council leaders.

Neighborhood and Community Action (*Accion Vecinal y Comunal*--AVEC), an NGO that was linked to the Catholic Church and the Christian Democratic Party, recruited candidates for leadership positions in neighborhood councils and women's centers.

AVEC promoted a more limited vision of the role of grassroots organizations that was consistent with the pragmatic views of the *concertacion*. Neighborhood councils were not envisioned by AVEC as constitutive of poblador interests as a social class. The councils were also not seen as a space for a radical devolution of power or for the continuation of popular struggle. AVEC's leaders stressed cooperation, not confrontation, with the *concertacion* and the post-transition government. The ability of organizations like AVEC and others to infiltrate local movements made the process of building strong and unified movements at the municipal level difficult because it fomented division and fragmentation within the *cabildos*.

As the date for the first municipal elections in 1992 got closer, political parties scrambled to build a local base of support in the neighborhood councils. Political parties of the *concertacion* recruited candidates to fill positions in the councils. Right wing parties also did the same, in particular the Democratic Independent Union (UDI)--a bastion of Pinochetismo. In an effort to expand its support base in the *poblaciones*, UDI recruited candidates for leadership positions in the neighborhood councils. UDI was very successful in building a core of support in popular municipalities because mayors that had been appointed by Pinochet used their position in the municipality to distribute resources to community leaders and organizations that supported UDI. Thus, over time the *cabildos* became divided along partisan lines and became subject to often bitter partisan squabbles. Ironically, then, democratization of municipal offices was a catalyst for co-optation and the decline of the *cabildos*.

By the end of 1990, leaders of grassroots community movements had come to see such efforts as an obstacle to further democratization. Many movement leaders that had supported the *concertacion* came to see the state as an obstacle to deepening democracy

and expanding popular participation: "The government is making the possibility of greater popular participation and of the creation of a more democratic society more difficult. We are witnessing the transition from a government of the people to a government of technocrats and administrators."<sup>12</sup> The democratic moment in the municipalities, in short, was coming to an end. Somewhat ironically, then, from the perspective of the *concertacion*, the radical demands for popular sovereignty that were articulated by the councils in the wake of the transition represented a potential threat to democracy--they threatened the provisions of the 1980 constitution. That is, they were a threat to the neoliberal elite settlement that had been agreed to by political elites from the opposition and the military which is enshrined in the 1980 constitution. As these demands were being defined by community leaders, they constituted a threat to elite control and to procedural democracy. This was one thing that the political class could not accept. The idea that the neighborhood councils should become a virtual grassroots government (i.e. a radicalized version of decentralization) was seen as a threat to the institutional order framed by the 1980 constitution, where neighborhood councils and other popular organizations were envisioned in a much more limited and subordinate role.

The 1980 constitution defined the role of the neighborhood councils as subordinate to the municipal government, where their role would be limited to representing specific community interests in the municipality, and to collaboration and cooperation with the municipal governments and the state in community development. Moreover, the municipality was defined as the primary space for collective action. The municipal arena became the political sphere of greatest significance in the development of popular collective action.

### **The Councils and the Municipality**

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<sup>12</sup>Cal y Canto 1990. "La Participacion Social en Tiempos de Transicion" Santiago: Cal y Canto Revista de Movimientos Sociales no.7 December

State and municipal actors saw the role of the neighborhood councils not as an incubator of popular democracy from below, but as an organization in civil society that would collaborate with the municipality in community development--i.e. as an organization that would in effect be an extension of the state's authority in the community.

The vision of the role that the neighborhood councils should play can be seen in the way in which officials Huechuraba's Directorate of Community Development (*Directorio de Desarrollo Comunitario*--DIDECO), the municipal agency that most closely interacts with grassroots organizations in the community, viewed the neighborhood councils. In this neoliberal era of self-reliant citizenship, the neighborhood councils were viewed by many DIDECO officials as somewhat anachronistic and as excessively political (*muy politizados*).<sup>13</sup>

There is too much politics in the *juntas de vecino* and this gets in the way of getting things done. The leaders (*dirigentes*) fight too much amongst themselves, and all they want to do is demand things from the municipality. They don't want to do things for themselves.

Thus, for the municipality, "politicized organizations"--meaning organizations that engage in discussions about public issues and that can potentially challenge the status quo--are seen as an obstacle to community development and to getting things done.<sup>14</sup>

Interviews with DIDECO officials in several municipalities suggests that the mode of participation preferred by DIDECO officials that worked with community organizations more closely resembled the "volunteer" mode described in Nina Eliasoph's<sup>15</sup> study of civil society in the United States. The volunteer mode of participation--i.e. participation in small community based associations-- is seen by neo-Tocquevillians as the basic building block of democratic governance. A salient feature of this mode of participation is that it

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<sup>13</sup>ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ironically, the idea that politics is an obstacle to progress was one of the cornerstones of Pinochet's discourse. Indeed, the regime sought to foment a form of popular participation that discourages politics.

<sup>15</sup>Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* Cambridge University Press

entails "curtailing political discussion" on the assumption that to do so will enhance the effectiveness of the organization. The DIDECO officials that I interviewed agreed with the premise that talking about and engaging in political debates reduces the effectiveness of community associations. In their interactions with grassroots organizations DIDECO officials actively sought to encourage a "volunteer" style of participation in all community organizations, in which political discussion was seen as corrosive to the organization and to accomplishing organizational objectives.

I found that this reading of the "politicization" of the neighborhood councils as a potential problem was prevalent in many community development offices. In the municipality of Lo Espejo, the director of community development (DIDECO) flatly argued that the "neighborhood councils are dying because they focus too much on politics." That is, being too political and too demanding has led to the decline of the neighborhood councils because municipal officials divert resources to other organizations who are more cooperative. As the director of DIDECO in Huechuraba put it:

We no longer work as much with the neighborhood councils because there are other organizations that are better able to work with the municipality. For example, we are having more success with senior citizens groups and with small business groups (*microempresa*), because they are not so political, and because they are more cooperative.<sup>16</sup>

Municipal bureaucrats, furthermore, viewed neighborhood council leaders with a considerable degree of distrust because neighborhood councils have historically been a thorn in the side of the municipality, and because there has been a long standing question of conflict over control between the municipality and the councils. Furthermore, Luzmenia and many council leaders were aware of the efforts of the municipality to weaken the councils:

The municipality prefers to work with other organizations because the *juntas de vecino* have traditionally been organizations of struggle (*organi-*

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with director of DIDECO in Huechuraba, June 2000

*zaciones de lucha*) and because *dirigentes* have often built a base of political support that is threatening to the mayor and the municipal council.

There is, in short, a relationship of tension between the *dirigentes* of the neighborhood councils and DIDECO officials in the municipality.

Thus, partly with the objective of diluting the role played by neighborhood councils, and partly with the objective of supporting a more plural civil society, municipal governments--with the support of the central government--sought to nurture and support alternative sites for popular participation. As the director of DIDECO for the municipality of Huechuraba put it:

We also want to help develop other organizations that can satisfy the demands that people have. For example, we work closely with women's organizations, youth groups, and sports clubs. We are also beginning to help develop an anti-drug network in the community, and we are supporting committees of citizen security.

From one perspective, this can be seen as supporting a more diverse and plural civil society. On the other hand, many community leaders see these efforts as a deliberate attempt to promote organizational fragmentation and pluralization at the local level with an eye toward facilitating social control--i.e. as a divide and conquer strategy. Leaders of Huechuraba's Union of Neighborhood Councils argued that in many cases the mayor created organizations in different *poblaciones* of Huechuraba with the goal of bypassing potential troublemakers. This was not only happening in Huechuraba. In several of the municipalities that I visited, municipal governments actively engaged in the process of building alternative organizations with the purpose of weakening those organizations that they saw as potential threats.

The efforts of the municipality to transform the face of civil society in Huechuraba seem to have born fruit: the number of organizations devoted to establishing a small business (*microempresa*), to provide women with a marketable skill in the market (*capacitacion*), or to participate in sports and cultural activities (arts, music, etc.) have proliferated since the early 1990s. An examination of Huechuraba's registry of social



organizations shows that the topography of social organization has been transformed: first, the number of self-help organizations and organizations created with the purpose of integrating people into the market that the municipality has granted legal standing to has increased. The number of self-help organizations granted legal standing by the municipality since 1990 has increased. In 1990, there were no such organizations. By 1997, there were thirty two organizations that could be classified as self-help organizations.<sup>17</sup> A number of senior citizens groups have also emerged and gained legal standing as organizations in the community. DIDECO has been actively promoting the creation of senior citizens organizations. Thus, a cursory glance at the registry of community and social organizations in Huechuraba would suggest that associational life in Huechuraba has become more vibrant, more diverse, and more plural over the last decade.<sup>18</sup>

By contrast, although they formally exist in the registry, by 1998, several neighborhood councils were no longer even functional--many councils did not hold meetings, they had not elected a leadership, in short, many councils existed in name only. Indeed, I attended several council meetings where less than ten *vecinos* came to the meeting. The councils and other associations that play a role in representing interests vis a vis the municipality (and the state) seem to be slowly decaying.

The state and the municipality have been active in nurturing this transformation in modes of popular participation. Indeed, many of these emergent self-help organizations have been sponsored by the municipality (and the state) in the drive to build civil society, and to support organizations that focus on self-help. More importantly, an important criteria of these organizations, as a report by the Division of Social Organizations points

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<sup>17</sup>Catastro de Organizaciones Comunitarias de Huechuraba 1997

<sup>18</sup>Putnam uses the number of organizations as an indicator of the robustness of associational life. As we shall see, however, this can be misleading. See Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* Princeton University Press

out, is that they “direct participation away from organizations centered on demanding things from the state.”<sup>19</sup> That is, one of the objectives is to create organizations that will help municipalities and the central government accomplish their objectives and that will lighten the burden of demands on the state. The Aylwin and Frei governments, for example, have made microenterprise and labor training and funding a central element of its social policy toward the poor. In support of these objectives, municipal community development offices have been de-emphasizing neighborhood councils in favor of self help type organizations.

The municipality and the central government have mechanisms at their disposal to channel participation into the types of organizations that it seeks to create. One of the primary mechanisms that has been used to accomplish this is funding and other material resources. The municipality of Huechuraba illustrates how the state and municipal government has been a factor in reconfiguring “participation” and how this has impacted important qualitative aspects of civil society and social movements. Huechuraba’s municipal government has been providing increasing support for sports clubs, youth organizations, cultural groups, and entrepreneurial organizations.<sup>20</sup> With funds from the state (FOSIS), the municipality has also supported organizations to train people (*capacitar*) for entry into the labor market as low paid workers. Courses for women’s hairdressing, cashiers, and supermarket salespeople to demonstrate new products (*mostradores*) have been among the most popular. Popular NGOs such as *Solidaridad* are given funding by the government through FOSIS, the Division of Social Organizations, and the local municipality to administer a local program of job training. Fusing the logic of the marketplace with popular participation has changed the face of participation, and the political implications of participation.

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<sup>19</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1996. “El Municipio Base del Desarrollo Local y Eje de la Descentralización de las Políticas Sociales” Santiago: Division de Organizaciones Sociales

<sup>20</sup>Interview with the director of community development of the municipality of Huechuraba.

In 1998, the municipality of Huechuraba received 85 million pesos (in 1998 approximately 190,000 US\$) from FOSIS to support community development programs.<sup>21</sup> These funds have been used to support certain types of organizations (and by extension to de-emphasize certain other types of organizations): small business ventures, organizations promoting women in the marketplace, organizations to provide young people with marketable skills in the labor market, senior citizens (*adulto mayor*) groups, and environmental organizations were the primary recipients of these funds.

Changes in the organizational structure of Huechuraba's civil society have in many ways mirrored the funding preferences of the state. That is, state funding has had the effect of generating a "crowding in" effect where organizations have emerged and clustered around the activities that the state and municipal governments support. Since the transition, there has been an expansion in the number of organizations devoted to the types of activities that the state supports, while those that are concerned with other activities have stagnated and declined due to lack of attention and interest. Although neighborhood councils continue to receive a considerable percentage of available funding, their share has been declining over the past decade.

The declining centrality of the neighborhood councils is particularly true in the relationship between municipalities and neighborhood councils: "The municipalities have established a pattern of linkages and funding that does not privilege the neighborhood councils, and that seeks to establish linkages with all community organizations that have legal standing."<sup>22</sup> However, the dynamics of these efforts has also had an atomizing effect. Organizational pluralism and the increasing number of organizations has made it very difficult for community leaders to unify around particular issues. Indeed, leaders of the neighborhood councils in Huechuraba as a general rule have relatively little interaction

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<sup>21</sup>Informe FOSIS 1998 Region Metropolitana

<sup>22</sup>del la Maza, Gonzalo 1999. "La Accion Colectiva Popular Urbana" *Chile en los Noventa* Cristian Toloza and Eugenio Lahera (editors) Santiago: Ediciones Dolmen

with other organizations in the municipality. Municipal governments prefer to deal with organizations on an individual basis, which has tended to generate a competitive dynamic among community organizations as they all pursue the same pool of funds. Furthermore, as we saw previously, the internal administrative organization of DIDECO is structured in such a way that organizations deal with the municipality through different offices.

Foweraker has noted that popular sector social movements in Latin America often become competitors amongst themselves. Inevitably, he points out, that social movements must “compete amongst themselves for state resources, and have no choice but to go rent-seeking in the hope of achieving something.”<sup>23</sup> What is the broader impact of this competitive funding process? Because all community organizations in Huechuraba are in pursuit of the same pool of funds in a competitive based funding scheme that turns organizations into competitors against each other, the effect has been to increase the axial gaze of popular organizations--i.e. the one to one relationship with the municipality--and to concomitantly diminish their horizontal gaze--their potential to build horizontal networks. When a neighborhood council leader looks at another neighborhood council leader or at the leader of a women’s center, what he or she often sees is not a comrade but a competitor for the funds that the municipality and the state provide.

Council leaders in Huechuraba consistently complained that they often acted in ways that undermined each other’s efforts. That is, they complained of the difficulty of sustaining horizontal networks of cooperation. The term that leaders of neighborhood councils used to describe actions taken by other council leaders to undermine the efforts of rival organizations is “*aserruchar el piso*” (to saw the floor underneath each other--the metaphor comes from cartoons). They do this through a variety of ways--by keeping information to themselves, by establishing friendships (*cuna*) with people in strategic positions in DIDECO and other municipal agencies and using these friendships to exclude

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<sup>23</sup>Foweraker, Joe 1995. *Theorizing Social Movements* Boulder: Pluto Press p.77

others, and by a variety of strategies. The broader impact of this has been to foment distrust among organizational leaders. The funding process, then, has been one factor in inducing within the municipality the atomization effects generated by incorporation into municipal politics. Under these circumstances it is difficult to build the horizontal linkages that are essential to the creation of popular movements that can exert an influence over policy.

At one time, the neighborhood councils played a key role as a secondary association that linked other organizations in a particular *poblacion* in an informal network. In the current institutional context, the neighborhood councils are for the most part no longer able to play that role in municipal politics. They are simply another of the myriad of organizations that are a part of the landscape of popular civil society. Thus, the types of linkages that the municipality has established with community associations has tended to exacerbate the process of fragmentation among different organizations.

## CHAPTER 6

### CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE POST-TRANSITION

#### Introduction

Changes in the associational matrix of Huechuraba's organized community can be seen as a microcosm for a broader process that has taken place in the wake of the transition to democracy: an overall "structural transformation of subaltern counterpublics" (to paraphrase the title of Habermas seminal work<sup>1</sup>). If we conceptualize the universe of associations found in Huechuraba as a representative slice of "popular civil society", we can ask how changes in the infrastructure of popular civil society in Huechuraba have impacted the process of democratic development? Neo-Tocquevillian scholars, such as Putnam, have argued that the vibrancy of associational life is one indicator of civic sociability. The paradox is that while the organizational fabric of Huechuraba's associational life may have become more plural and diversified in that more community groups--such as youth groups, self-help groups, health care groups, and others--have emerged and are able to openly organize, the ability of popular civil society to effectively articulate interests seems to have declined.

To examine this question with greater theoretical rigor we can turn to the democratic theory literature and its treatment of associations. In his analysis of associations and their impact on democracy, Warren<sup>2</sup> has pointed out that associational life can potentially have several different types of democratic effects:

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas, Jurgen 1997. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* MIT Press

<sup>2</sup>Warren, Mark E. 2000. *Democracy and Association* Princeton University Press

(1) Developmental effects--i.e. the creation of social capital, civic skills and virtue, and a sense of efficacy and empowerment. Associations, argues Putnam, instill "habits of cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness."<sup>3</sup>

(2) Public sphere effects--the formation of public opinion or the building of consciousness through processes of deliberation. Civil society houses publics and provide the "social infrastructure of public communication."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a public sphere (or a subaltern counterpublic) is created through an "interlocking net of multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations."<sup>5</sup> Associations "constitute public spheres when they frame issues by making public assertions or taking public positions--that is, when they attempt to constitute the terms by means of which an issue is explored."<sup>6</sup> That is, the public sphere must "amplify the pressures of problems, that is, not only detect and identify problems but also convincingly and influentially thematize them...and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes."<sup>7</sup> The effect of the policies of the *concertacion* have been to dampen and atomize the public sphere.

(3) Finally, in a democracy associations also have critical institutional effects such as representation, resistance, and legitimation. Associations allow for interests to be represented in the political arena and they provide spaces for the organization of resistance to state policies. Indeed, Tocqueville argued that in a democracy, one of the primary functions of associations in civil society is that they constitute an effective counterbalance to the state, which he saw as a potential threat to the status quo.

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<sup>3</sup>Putnam, Robert D. 1993. Making Democracy Work Civic Traditions In Modern Italy Princeton University Press p.90

<sup>4</sup>ibid. p.78

<sup>5</sup>Benhabib, Seyla 1996. "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy" Democracy and Difference Contesting the Boundaries of the Political Seyla Benhabib (editor) Princeton University Press p.74

<sup>6</sup>ibid. p.79

<sup>7</sup>Habermas, Jurgen 1996. Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy MIT Press

While analysts in the neo-Tocquevillian tradition have focused extensively on the creation of social capital and the development of a civic culture--i.e. norms of reciprocity, horizontal networks of civic cooperation, civic communities, and civic skills, they have largely ignored the public sphere and institutional effects that associational life have on democratic development. Indeed, according to Putnam, organizations do not necessarily have to be "political" to have an impact on democratic governance. As he puts it: "the manifest purpose of the association need not be political." The mere presence of associations can serve to build social capital. Indeed, Putnam has suggested that any type of associations, except those that are built around authoritarian clientelist bonds, can serve as the basis for the creation of social capital and civic communities.<sup>8</sup> Civic communities are marked by civic engagement: "Citizenship in a civic community" argued Putnam, "is marked...by active participation in public affairs."<sup>9</sup> The neo-Tocquevillian thesis, in short, argues that associations are crucial to democratic governance. Civil associations, as Putnam argues, "contribute to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government...because of their internal effects on individual members and because of their external effects on the wider polity."<sup>10</sup> For Putnam, then, building social capital (networks of cooperation and civic engagement) is "the key to making democracy work."<sup>11</sup> There is a tacit assumption that associations that build social capital, trust, and horizontal networks will somehow automatically engage in public minded discussions and seek to exert influence over public affairs. The dynamics through which social capital is used in the creation of a vibrant public sphere (or subaltern counterpublic) and into effective political capital is not understood.

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<sup>8</sup>Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* Princeton University Press

<sup>9</sup>ibid. p.87

<sup>10</sup>ibid. p.89

<sup>11</sup>ibid. p.185



However, whether an organization engages in or chooses to avoid politics matters. The purpose of the association matters: watching birds and playing soccer does not necessarily "make democracy work." Associations that stay out of politics and that cooperate to accomplish socially productive goals can also make authoritarianism, fascism, and totalitarianism work.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the Pinochet dictatorship organized its own networks of women's groups (CEMA-Chile) in the *poblaciones*, some of which became the basis for building a network of support for the regime. They also, as we saw, incorporated the neighborhood councils as a base of support. These networks engaged in socially constructive activities and cooperated in community development projects, but supported an authoritarian status quo.

The social capital required for effective citizenship in the political arena, for example to organize a social movement and mobilize contentious collective action, is different than the social capital required to cooperate to organize a soccer match. Effective political citizenship requires that associations constitute themselves as a public sphere where public deliberation can take place, and where interest articulation and representation can occur. This does not automatically happen within associations. Indeed, some associations based on horizontal ties of reciprocity, trust, and cooperation may deliberately avoid political debate and public minded discussions. Many of the organizations in Huechuraba have indeed contributed to the development of some forms of social capital and networks of trust and cooperation. Networks of civic minded citizens have emerged in some municipalities. However, these groups are not necessarily engaged with politics.

The transformation of the associational infrastructure of Huechuraba--the emergence of new types of associations, the fragmentation of old networks and the emergence of new networks in the context of a new institutional reality--is important

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<sup>12</sup>Berman, Sheri 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic" *World Politics* 49.3

because the logic that underpins many of these newly emerging organizations is different from that of popular movements and neighborhood councils: whereas the very definition of neighborhood councils and popular movements is “political” in that they are associations that interact with the municipality and the state for the purpose of pursuing nonexcludable public goods (i.e. of demanding “things” from the state), the constitutive purpose of many new organizations is centered around excludable individual material goods (as in the small business organization and labor training organizations), or identity based goods (church groups, cultural groups, youth groups, etc.). This in itself tells us something about political culture in Chile. In short, while the spaces within organizations may have become more democratic, this has not necessarily “made democracy work.”

The objectives of these new organizations are more oriented toward socializing and integrating people into the new market centered status quo and toward developing the personal individual skills necessary to become a viable member of neoliberal capitalist society. These are organizations that are generally vested in the existing hegemony, and for the most part do not seek to challenge the status quo. Thus, we should expect that the impact that these types of organizations have on the development of civil society and on democratic development to be different than organizations that are constituted as a space for challenging the status quo and for pursuing material public goods. As Warren’s study of the effects of associational life on democracy has argued: “The democratic effects of an association are affected by whether it is embedded in its medium and serves to reproduce it or whether it seeks to alter the status quo.”<sup>13</sup> It would certainly seem reasonable to put forward the hypothesis that the potential of many of these new organizations to constitute themselves as a subaltern counterpublic would be somewhat compromised by the purposes of the organization.

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<sup>13</sup>Warren, 2000. op.cit. p.110

Thus, while these types of organizations may be suitable to the development of social capital and some civic skills, they are not necessarily suited to the development of other critical citizenship skills (such as voice) or to important institutional effects (such as representation, resistance or legitimizing democracy). Indeed, as we shall see in the following chapters, a sense of civic competence has been developed that is premised on sidestepping political questions.

It is somewhat paradoxical that despite the pluralization and increased organizational density of civil society over the past ten years, the capacity of civil society to resist and oppose the state or the dominant class and to have an influence in changing the status quo seems to have declined. It is hard to find a single instance when organizations in popular civil society prevailed over the state on a matter of substance: most of the fundamental demands of popular movements have gone unaddressed. Also, as surveys have shown, public support for democracy has actually declined in Chile over the last ten years.

TABLE 6-1

Legitimacy and Support for Democracy <sup>14</sup>				
1988	1991	1992	1995	1996
57%	87%	79%	52%	54%

Putnam argued that associations have external effects on democracy, they make democracy work and mediate state-society relations. However, it is equally true that the external democracy (i.e. the structures of the state and of the infrastructure for popular participation) has effects on the organization: "We should not abstract associational effects from the fields of forces, fatalities, compulsions and sunk costs within which they come to be. Many of these forces enable power relations to be replicated within associations."<sup>15</sup> The external constrained environment of "protected democracy" and the

<sup>14</sup>Lagos, Marta "Latin America's Smiling Mask" *Journal of Democracy* 8, no.3 1997

<sup>15</sup>Warren, 2000. op. cit. p.99

elite settlement that underpins post-transition democracy, in which associations in Huechuraba must navigate, has hampered their effectiveness thus undermining the purported external effects of associational life, which has fueled the turn away from politics. Because they have had such a small effect on their external environment (on the wider polity), their contribution to the development of robust forms of citizenship has been somewhat limited.

Furthermore, there has been little effort to foster effective spaces for meaningful participation and deliberation. Small business organizations and labor training organizations--a focal point of state support since 1990--are designed to create small scale entrepreneurs and integrate people into the market. They are not created to challenge premises of the neoliberal order or the market, or to get involved in debating important political questions. Thus, it is conceivable that people may participate in these types of organizations and that at the same time key components of citizenship, such as the capacity for resistance and representation, may actually diminish. They may develop a sense of civic competence and efficacy while steering clear of political issues and debates. The legitimacy of democracy may also diminish, despite the pluralization of civil society. The state has taken concrete steps that weaken and undermine those types of organizations that have served as centers of dissenting voices and as centers for challenging the status quo (resistance).

Further, as we shall see below, the external structure of power can be a catalyst for organizations to squelch and stifle internal political debate and discussion and seek to avoid confrontation, while at the same time building social capital and providing support for the status quo. Many of these organizations are less oriented toward demanding changes in the political status quo than they are with finding a viable niche within the status quo. Often this niche has entailed exiting the political arena. Many organizations seek to remain at arms length from the political world of the municipality and the state, and have turned inward and away from public concerns.

### Social Capital without Citizenship

A comment made by the president of a women's center of *Poblacion Simon Bolivar* in Huechuraba serves to underscore the almost "apolitical" nature of some organizations:

We don't get involved with the municipality or with the government, we only get together to have a *tecito* and to get away from the house for a while. We never discuss politics, and we don't care about democracy or dictatorship or political things. Politics only brings disorder...that is why one of the rules of our organization is no politics and no religion...we are apolitical. The law also says that as an organization we are not to get involved in politics.<sup>16</sup>

She went on to tell me that her organization would still meet during the dictatorship and that nothing really changed for her and the organization when the *concertacion* came to power: "We still get together every Thursday afternoon to sew, gossip (*copuchar*), and socialize."

The Simon Bolivar Women's Center illustrates a case where women have built a "civic community," but where instead of becoming active participants in public affairs, they have disengaged from political activity. They have become, in short, a politically apathetic civic community. Viewed from the perspective of building social capital and networks of reciprocity and trust, the Simon Bolivar women's center has certainly contributed to building community and to the development of interpersonal trust and norms of reciprocity among its members. Indeed, participants told me of how much they could count on each other, and how much they trusted each other. Many of the women of the mother's center have been participating in the organization for twenty years or more. They have built a mutual support network based on trust and cooperation. They have also developed a rather dense pattern of interactions that extends beyond the confines of the organization to everyday life in the community: they interact with each other on an almost daily basis.

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with president of a mother's center in Huechuraba. October 1999

Furthermore, because the physical space in which the *poblacion* is confined is small and has problems of overcrowding, the women of the center (and the rest of the community) have had to develop informal rules and codes--norms of reciprocity--to guide interactions. The women see each other everyday in the *pobla*, when they go to the corner *negocio* (store) to buy bread, milk, and other items household items or when they hang their clothes out to dry. During the course of the morning, they stand outside of their houses and share gossip while they pour water on the sidewalk to clean their area of the sidewalk. They routinely borrow things from each other. In short, they know each other intimately, and thus have developed a dense network of social relations that has an impact on the way in which the mother's center is organized. They have lived in the *pobla* since the mid 1960s, and many have grown up together. One problem in this situation, however, is that it is difficult to tell whether interpersonal trust was fostered by the organization or by the daily interactions that take place in the community. That is, has the organization fostered trust among the women, or has the trust that has been built in the context of years of community life been transferred to the mother's center?

Nevertheless, the women of the center have mediated conflicts in the community between neighbors and have actually been involved in solving social dilemmas in the community, independently of the municipality. The leadership of the women's center has helped to solve common problems faced by the community: they have led clean up campaigns that have made the external environment of the *poblacion* more pleasant, they have raised money to buy trees to plant in the barren plaza, and they work with other organizations in the community to cooperate in solving problems faced by the community. When the neighboring community was flooded by a winter storm, they mobilized to help. They opened the women's center to provide shelter to families whose homes had been flooded. They also collected clothing, food, medicine, and blankets for the victims.

By participating in the Huechuraba Women's Center (*Centro de la Mujer de Huechuraba*), they also have built networks of cooperation with other women's

organizations in the *comuna*. The Huechuraba Women's Center brings together all of the women's organizations of Huechuraba, where participants organize activities at the level of the *comuna*. Working within the Center, the network extends beyond the *poblacion* and into the other communities of Huechuraba. They have developed dense bonds of inter-organizational cooperation. In short, within Huechuraba, they have formed a local horizontal network based on trust, reciprocity, and cooperation.

However, the interpersonal trust that has been fostered by community relations and within the organization has not turned into generalizable reciprocity and trust that extends beyond the framework of the Huechuraba Women's Center. That is, although the women in the center trust each other and routinely cooperate with each other, they show strong distrust for the broader world outside their organizational and community network. In Putnam's terms, the women's center has built "bonding social capital", but has yet to translate this into bridging social capital.

This sharp difference in levels of interpersonal trust within the community and generalizable trust beyond the community is shown in the following survey questions that was asked of 61 women in the mother's center.

Table 6-2

Generalizable and Interpersonal Trust	
Generalizable Trust	Interpersonal Trust
"In general, people can be trusted."	"People in my community can be trusted."
Strongly Agree: 4%	Strongly Agree: 12%
Agree: 22%	Agree: 44%
Disagree: 63%	Disagree: 35%
Strongly Disagree: 11%	Strongly Disagree: 9% (N=61)

These responses suggest that trust does not extend beyond the immediate community and the *comuna* of Huechuraba. The world outside of the associational network and the community is specifically not to be trusted.

This suggests that while organizations may help to build trust and cooperation at the level of the community, converting interpersonal trust into generalizable trust is a

much more difficult matter, and probably has to do not so much with the organizations but with the broader institutional framework, where transparency and impartiality can serve to build a more generalizable trust.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, while the women of the center trust each other, they do not trust political elites or the political system. Indeed, trust in government is extremely low. They avoid politics in part because they view politics and political leaders with a deep sense of mistrust:

The politicians are out for themselves, they only come around when they want our vote, and then you don't hear from them again. They don't do anything for the people. One doesn't get anything but trouble by getting involved in politics.

Thus, it may be that the constitutional constraints on democracy, which some have argued make for democratic stability and consolidation, undermine trust in the government because it generates the appearance (and the reality) of favoritism toward the wealthy and the powerful.

The avoidance of politics, however, has a corrosive impact on other aspects of democratic development. In terms of contributing toward the creation of a public sphere--or subaltern counterpublic--the impact of the mother's center is at best ambiguous. Indeed, we might ask what happens when in the name of conflict avoidance, maintaining unity, fear of retribution, a sense that the system is immutable, or a perception that the government cannot be trusted, people stop engaging in public minded discussion and constrain their discussions and conversations? What is the impact on the public sphere dimension of associations of this situation?

Since the members of the mother's center actively seek to avoid all types of political discussions--a form of discursive exit--the center contributes little in the way of creating a public sphere/subaltern counterpublic through processes of deliberation and discussion. In avoiding political discourse, the center in effect has also become a bulwark

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<sup>17</sup>Cohen, Jean "Trust, Voluntary Association and Workable Democracy: The Contemporary American Discourse of Civil Society" *Democracy and Trust* Mark E. Warren (editor) Cambridge University Press 1999



of the status quo. By turning away from political involvement, they cede the power to define the agenda to the municipality and the state, which serves to perpetuate the status quo. Political silence rewards the powerholders in society. In an effort to avoid “public-minded debate” the members of the association also suppress alternative ideas. By avoiding political discussions, alternative discourses are excluded and banished from what Eliasoph would call “frontstage” conversation. In this situation, social capital is deployed for the purposes of suppressing dissenting voices in the name of community.

Why did the women of the mother’s center seek to avoid politics and political discussions? This imperative of avoiding political discussions and of skirting involvement with political institutions (the municipality and the government) may have to do with a sense of powerlessness vis a vis the political system that has been learned over time and through various iterations. People have learned through the experiences of the last decade that the basic structures of the system are unalterable. That is, it may have to do with the absence of a sense of efficacy--the sense that one could have an impact on public life if one chose to do so.

However, efficacy can have several dimensions: personal and public/political. Although members of the mother’s center generally believed that they had the capacity to change things in their personal life (family relations, social life, personal growth), concerning their capacity to change the political system (change laws that they consider unjust, or influence policy for example), they saw themselves as largely incapable of changing the basis structures, actions and policies of the government.

Table 6-3

General vs. Political Efficacy

<u>General Efficacy</u>	<u>Political Efficacy</u>
<u>“I can change things in my life”</u>	<u>“I can influence the government”</u>
Strongly Agree: 13%	Strongly Agree: 2%
Agree: 48%	Agree: 23%
Disagree: 33%	Disagree: 54%
Strongly Disagree: 6%	Strongly Disagree: 20% (N=61)

While the women who participated in the center generally felt that they could change the circumstances of their own personal lives (and it is unclear whether the mother's center had much to do with this), at the same time, they felt that they had little capacity to change the government or have a significant influence over public issues (it is in this dimension of efficacy that participation in associations is most relevant).

A final question drives home this point: Respondents in the women's center were asked to respond to the following question: "If the government were to enact a law that you considered unfair or unjust (*injusto*), what do you think that you and your organization could do about it?" The responses to this question can be compared to the responses of the general population to the same question.

TABLE 6-4

<u>Citizens and Unfair Laws</u>	
<u>Women's Center</u>	<u>General Population</u>
Nothing: 67%	Nothing: 64%
Write a Petition: 19%	Petition: 21%
Organize/Participate in a Protest: 8%	Organize/Protest: 10%
Don't Know: 6% (N=61)	Don't Know: 5% (N=1002)

The differences between participants in the women's center and the general population are negligible. Many women in the center saw government and their association as entirely separate spaces: "We can't change the laws" one woman explained "because that is for the government to do." This comment speaks volumes about the way in which the role of the citizen is perceived. This view of associations as separate from the realm of politics is the product of political learning. As one of the women told me, when I asked her about changing the government:

We can't change the government...we've learned that by banging our heads against the wall. Look at what happens, we vote, and nothing changes, people protest and nothing changes, so, you tell me...can we change the government? Not really, all we can do is vote and then abide by the law.

Political efficacy is built by interacting with the state or the municipality and winning concessions from powerholders. The women's center, by contrast, has learned that while

they may be able to change the circumstances of their own lives, they have no realistic chance to change the state in any significant way.

A second reason for avoiding political talk is that the continued viability of the women's center as an organization might very well hinge upon keeping overt political conversation and debate off of the agenda of the organization. Since political issues are laden with the potential for difference and strong conflict, political discussions and conversations can be a catalyst for exit from the organization. Thus, instead of discussing political differences, the members of the center put those aside and search for a basis for common ground, which is found in social activities--such as artisan activities--that have little to do with politics.

In the current institutional context, moreover, exiting the women's center is relatively easy because there is always the option of forming another center. Ease of exit, as Hirschman has pointed out, makes voice inside organizations less likely.<sup>18</sup> This has not always been the case. Prior to 1973, laws that governed the women's and mother's centers gave them a representational monopoly in their particular community. That is, each *unidad vecinal*--territorial unit (generally the territorial unit was the *poblacion*)--had one women's center, which was given a monopoly of representation for that particular community. Membership in the organization was to a certain degree nonvoluntary in that the cost of exit was relatively high. Since women's and mother's centers provided a variety of benefits from the government during this period, this made membership in the organization important and raised the cost of exit. In this situation, exit was not a very attractive option, making voice within the organization more likely.

However, new "freedom of association" laws put in place at the end of the dictatorship, with the purpose of fragmenting community associations and diluting the potential for the emergence of strong popular movements, allow women to organize more

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<sup>18</sup>Hirschman, Albert O. 1977. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

than one center per community, which facilitates exit and fragmentation. That is, women's organizations no longer have a monopoly of representation in the community. In Huechuraba and other communities, conflicts within organizations have prompted the break up of an organization and the creation of new rival organizations within the community. Some communities and territorial units have two, three, and even four mother's centers as the result of internal conflicts. Many of these organizations have come to see each other as rivals and compete for access and influence to the resources of the municipality, facilitating municipal control. Control by the municipality is facilitated because municipal officials can support those organizations that cooperate with the municipality, leaving the more troublesome organizations to wither on the vine.<sup>19</sup> Somewhat ironically, then, "freedom of association" laws that were argued to be conducive to a pluralistic, vibrant civil society in some cases have actually undermined the ability of associations to act collectively and have contributed to the weakness of popular civil society.

This aversion to discussing issues that might be construed as political, however, severely hampers and distorts any contribution that the organization might make toward creating a viable subaltern counterpublic. Avoiding political discussion and debate also has an impact on the institutional effects that the women's center has within the municipality. Indeed, the center seems to do little in the way of adding to the institutional robustness of democracy through institutional effects, such as representation, resistance, or legitimizing democracy.

They rarely interact with the municipality, and when they do it has generally been to seek financial support for a specific purpose. The biggest interaction with the state/municipality that the center has had since the transition was when FOSIS and the

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<sup>19</sup>Interview with Francisco Becerra, president of the Metropolitan Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEMUC) November 1999

municipality awarded the organization funds for the construction of a “*sede social*” (community center) where they could hold activities and meetings. The *sede* was built in 1997, and has become a space where people congregate to socialize--it has a kitchen, a television, and an activities room. Different groups (soccer clubs, youth groups, etc.) are able to use the center to hold meetings and reunions. Other than the effort to get the community center, however, the leaders of the organization “keep to themselves and stay out of politics.”

Viewed from another perspective, however, it can be argued that the women’s center highlights some of the ambiguities and contradictions of post-transition democracy. When the women’s center is viewed through a Foucaultian prism, it can be argued that this is precisely the intent of the powerholders: foster an institutional climate that creates a democracy that produces self-reliant and self-regulating citizens that will demand little of a state, which given the current context, can offer little. In other words, this situation fosters democracy while at the same time sustaining a broader undemocratic set of arrangements that maintains the structures of privilege and power intact.

On one hand, the women of the center have created horizontal civic communities and have generated social capital, which from a neo-Tocquevillian perspective helps to make democracy work. First, by carrying out some quasi-governmental functions (conflict resolution, clean up drives, etc.) they alleviate pressure on the state to carry out such activities. Second, by avoiding the state, they do not challenge the status quo. Third, they help to foster community. On the other hand, by avoiding political debate and participation in public (state/municipal) affairs, they perpetuate a broader power structure that acts against their interests and that can be in many ways profoundly undemocratic.

### **From Social Movement to Small Business: Huechuraba’s Soup Kitchens**

An important change since 1990 has been the structural transformation of an entire sector of the popular movement that had at one time constituted a key spaces within the popular social movement that emerged in the 1980s: the OEPs (Popular Economic

Organizations). During the dictatorship, OEPs (for example, soup kitchens, labor and artisan workshops) emerged to become spaces for the construction of mutualism and solidarity--an alternative to neoliberal capitalism.

Within the context of changing linkages between the municipality and associations, organizations that had once been a part of a popular social movement sector have been transformed. Huechuraba's soup kitchens provide an example of how spaces that once constituted a space for resistance and mobilization against neoliberalism have been transformed by integrating them into the neoliberal model. With funding from the state and guidance from NGOs contracted by FOSIS, soup kitchens (*ollas comunes*) in Huechuraba reconfigured themselves into service enterprises (*empresas de servicio*) that were created with the goal of integrating the women who participate in the soup kitchens into the labor market as a small business. In short, the soup kitchens went from social movement to small business (*microempresa*).

In Huechuraba, like other popular sector municipalities, the soup kitchens emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s in response to the harsh economic conditions created by the Pinochet regime's economic restructuring policies. They emerged in many of Santiago's *poblaciones* as part of the network of organizations that comprised a popular social movement in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> The women who organized and led the soup kitchens and many of those who participated in them were involved in the protests against the regime in Huechuraba and in other *comunas*. In Huechuraba, Luzmenia was involved in organizing soup kitchens in *La Pincoya*, *Patria Nueva*, and *Pablo Neruda*. The first soup kitchen in Huechuraba began functioning in late 1975 in a shack in the *poblacion Ultima Hora*.<sup>21</sup> Other soup kitchens began to sprout up in neighboring *poblaciones*. Within a few months there were almost a dozen soup kitchens operating in Huechuraba. In 1977, a

<sup>20</sup>Oxhorn, Philip 1995. *Organizing Civil Society The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile*. Pennsylvania State University Press

<sup>21</sup>ECO 1998. *Historia de la Comuna de Huechuraba Memoria y Oralidad Popular Urbana*. Santiago: ECO

coordinating committee (*coordinadora de ollas comunes*) of soup kitchens was created in several *poblaciones* of Huechuraba and Conchali. The coordinating committee worked to overcome common logistical problems associated with the soup kitchens. For example, they created different committees to find sources of food that would go to the “*feria*” (open air market) on Recoleta street where they were given left over fruits, vegetables, and other products that would then be distributed among the different soup kitchens. An organizational spin off of the soup kitchens were the health care groups (*grupos de salud*) that emerged and that, with the support of the Catholic Church and the Vicaria de la Solidaridad, eventually created an alternative health care clinic (*consultorio alternativo*) in 1978.<sup>22</sup>

By the latter 1970s, these organizations were already engaged in a low intensity struggle against the dictatorship—they organized several sit-ins in the municipality of Conchali (when Huechuraba was part of the municipality of Conchali) demanding food for children and medicines for the elderly. These struggles were not intended to end the regime but to extract concessions from the regime. However, they opened up space for action and they created consciousness. In struggling for food and medicine, they also were a catalyst for consciousness raising. In 1980 and 1981, Huechuraba’s soup kitchens became integrated into the *poblador* movement when the *coordinadora* became a member of METRO, and CUP, and became active in the resistance against the regime.

Huechuraba’s soup kitchens, then, can be seen as one of the organizational incubators in the development of a “subaltern counterpublic” in the 1980s that was imbued with a certain Gramscian counter-hegemonic dynamic. That is, the soup kitchens in Huechuraba and elsewhere constituted an element of the base of the popular movement that was emerging to oppose the regime. Further, as Oxhorn’s<sup>23</sup> study has suggested,

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with Luzmenia Toro, October 1998

<sup>23</sup>Oxhorn, 1995 op. cit.

many of these organizations had internal democratizing qualities associated with them--they promoted cooperation, interpersonal trust, discussion, and an egalitarian ethos. NGOs that were helping the soup kitchens, particularly the Programa de Economía de Trabajo (PET), emphasized internal democracy in organizing soup kitchen and popular dining halls (*comedores populares*).<sup>24</sup> They also carried within their mode of action an alternative vision of society that was in sharp conflict with the key moral and philosophical underpinnings of neoliberalism: "The OEPs are carriers of values of solidarity, popular creativity, autonomy, and of social democratic relations and popular participation."<sup>25</sup>

The soup kitchens and popular dining halls continued to operate in Huechuraba through the transition period and the beginning of the Aylwin government. During the transition period, they alternated between providing food for people in the community and mobilizing the *poblaciones* in Huechuraba for protest against the regime. During protests that took place in the *poblaciones*, they fed the protesters who were on the streets. Soup kitchen leaders from Huechuraba also participated in hunger marches sponsored by MUDECHI, METRO, and CUP in the mid 1980s. They used these marches to publicize the problem of hunger in the *poblaciones*.

After the transition, the Aylwin government sought ways to integrate the soup kitchens and other popular economic organizations into mainstream Chilean society. Indeed, PET warned that if left on their own, "there is a grave risk that these organizations will gradually wither away." Ways had to be found, then, to "insert these organizations into the formal markets of the neoliberal economy."<sup>26</sup> NGOs that supported the *concertación* and had linkages to popular organizations and movements pressured the

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<sup>24</sup>PET 1986. "La Olla Comun Organizaciones Economicas Populares Cartilla de Capacitacion Popular" Santiago: PET 1986

<sup>25</sup>Razeto, Luis 1985. "Organizaciones Economicas Populares Mas Alla de la Subsistencia" Santiago: PET

<sup>26</sup>PET 1991. "Las Organizaciones Economicas Populares" Santiago: PET



government to work with popular economic organizations and find ways of incorporating and supporting them.

Many of the intellectuals who had worked with the NGOs during the transition period were brought into official policymaking positions in the *concertacion* government, where they brought with them their ideas concerning the role that popular economic organizations should play in the post-transition. That is, they became policymakers within the state. Clarisa Hardy, who had worked with soup kitchens and popular organizations with PET (and who is also a member of the socialist party), for example, became a key policymaker in the ministry of planning and FOSIS, and later became a director in the Frei government's anti-poverty strategy. Guillermo Campero, who had been associated with PET and ILET (and who wrote a comprehensive and influential study of popular economic organizations<sup>27</sup>) became the minister of labor during the Aylwin government. Other important NGO leaders also became members of the government policymaking establishment. The ideas that had been developed in the 1980s in NGOs, INGOs, and intellectual think tanks could now be implemented. Intellectuals in these positions sought to integrate the popular economic organizations into the neoliberal development model, in the hope that doing so would somehow transform and humanize neoliberalism. That is, they believed that integrating OEPs into the market would make the marketplace more democratic. OEPs would ameliorate and soften the harder edges of the logic that underpinned the neoliberal model.

The devolution to organizations in civil society of functions that were previously state functions, furthermore, is one of the cornerstones of the model of state-civil society relations being advanced by international donor agencies (Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank). This "third way" model of social democracy has been very

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<sup>27</sup> Campero, Guillermo 1986. *Entre la Sobrevivencia y la Accion Política: Las Organizaciones de Pobladores en Santiago* Santiago: Estudios ILET

influential in key circles within the *concertacion*. Such programs have contributed to the emergence of a non-state public sector (*organismos publicos no-etatales--OPNES*), which have been portrayed as a vehicle for the deepening of democracy through the democratization of social services.

Thus in 1991, as part of its program to build civil society and incorporate many of the popular organizations that had emerged in the 1980s, the *concertacion*'s school nutrition program, PAE (*Programa de Alimentacion Escolar*), contracted the soup kitchens to provide lunches for schools in Huechuraba (they also did this with soup kitchens in *Pudahuel* and *Cerro Navia*). The ministry of education and FOSIS provided the soup kitchen with funds to purchase equipment and food in order to begin to provide meals for the government's school nutrition program. NGOs provided the technical skills that were needed to build a small business. Initially, they were only given funding to begin providing school lunches in the *La Pincoya* sector of Huechuraba. Within a year, however, they were providing lunches to fifteen schools in the *comuna*, and turning a financial profit.<sup>28</sup> The objective of the program was to harness the solidarity that had been one of the central characteristics of the *ollas comunes* with the entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism.

However, the transformation of the soup kitchens, from grassroots social movement to private enterprise changed the soup kitchens of Huechuraba (and other municipalities as well) in two important dimensions that had an impact on the democratic qualities of the organization. First, in terms of their relationship vis a vis the state, the soup kitchens essentially became subcontractors and clients of the state. Thus, their role as a counterbalance to the state was essentially lost. Thus, what had been a potentially counter-hegemonic association embedded in a logic that was radically different from the

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<sup>28</sup>PROSAM 1994. "De La Olla Comun a La Empresa de Servicios. Un Camino de Integracion Social" Santiago: PROSAM

logic of neoliberalism, became a vested organization with a stake in the status quo. While at times they have been able to negotiate concessions from the state, these successes have been few and far between.

More importantly, the internal logic of the soup kitchens was transformed by their shifting location in social space. The constitutive logic of the organizations were transformed: what had been organizations created for the purpose of helping the community, their integration into the market as a small service enterprise changed their constitutive logic to the pursuit of individual material goods (profit). The inner space of the soup kitchens, that had been one of the myriad of spaces in which a subaltern counterpublic emerged in the 1980s, was in effect colonized by an entirely different imperative--the profit motive. By becoming, in effect, a small capitalist enterprise, the soup kitchens become organized around the pursuit of profit (i.e. individual material goods). The imperative of capitalism undermined the alternative collective and solidary ethic that had been at the heart of the soup kitchens. The soup kitchens had been in many ways the antithesis to neoliberalism--indeed, they were created as a space where alternatives to neoliberalism and its model of "homo economicus" could develop--but by becoming invested in the status quo as a for profit project, the public sphere quality of the organization was transformed. The internal democratic tendencies that had been one of the defining characteristics of these types of organizations<sup>29</sup> was lost as they became more of a for profit enterprise instead of a social organization. The entire calculus of the soup kitchens was transformed. This also changed the nature of the linkages of the soup kitchens to the community. Their linkages to the community were severed as they became oriented toward one objective: preparing school lunches while making a profit.

Internal divisions also emerged within the organizations, as some women assumed the role of employers and others assumed the role of workers. An internal hierarchy that

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<sup>29</sup>Oxhorn, 1995 op. cit.

was highly authoritarian emerged within the inner dynamics of the organization.<sup>30</sup> Within a year, many women had simply stopped participating in the program. Luzmenia, for example, stopped participating in the soup kitchens in late 1992. Thus, changes in the relationship of popular organizations to the state is only one dimension of the transformation of popular civil society in the post-transition. Internal transformations have changed the very grassroots social movement logic of many of these organizations.

The soup kitchens provide one example of a sea change in the way in which the logic of organization and participation has been transformed. They are also an example of the shift in modes of popular participation, which are a reflection of the politics of participation in the neoliberal era whose symptoms are a general retreat from politics--an activity that is potentially fraught with hazard--and the privatization of the social question by casting it as off limits to public debate and discussion.

The changing nature of many organizations has had an effect on democratic development. The changing dynamic of participation has had an impact on municipal politics because many emerging organizations are less concerned with political issues and more centered around personal questions, and with preparing people for integration as citizens in a market driven society. In short, in the new forms of participation being stimulated by the *concertacion* the role of the citizen is either to support government (by carrying out services that were previously the purview of the state) or to ignore government (by engaging in activities that have little to do with politics), but not to challenge the government.

### **Transforming Civil Society: Huechuraba's Health Care Committees**

A third dimension of the process of reorganizing popular civil society in the post-transition period is captured by the experience of the health care groups that emerged in Huechuraba during the dictatorship. This third dimension of the transformation of

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<sup>30</sup>PROSAM, 1994 op. cit.

popular civil society illustrates what could be called an “education dimension” of state-society relations--i.e. the extension of the model of social participation--with its accompanying model of citizenship into peripheral communities. The organization of health care committees in Huechuraba illustrates how this process works.

In many low income communities and municipalities, small networks of health care activists, made up primarily of women, that monitor conditions at the local primary health care clinics--the *consultorios*--and listen to the complaints of those who use the *consultorios* emerged during the dictatorship. In Huechuraba, health care groups organized alternative health care clinics and pooled resources to buy medicines and other medical supplies. They also pooled their resources to bring doctors into the *poblaciones* on a regular basis. Following the transition, the ministry of health has move to sponsor and support these networks.<sup>31</sup> Within the ministry of health (MINSAL), an office of social participation was created to establish linkages to community organizations and to foment the creation of health care organizations in popular communities.<sup>32</sup> Health care committees were given legal recognition (*personalidad juridica*) as a social organization by the state or the municipality. Luzmenia is a *dirigenta*--leader--in one of these committees.

In theory, these organizations are supposed to be watchdog citizens' groups created to monitor the activities and practices of health care clinics, and to communicate complaints to local municipal departments of health and to the ministry of health. However, the health care committees are encouraged to act as monitors to ensure that existing laws are enforced. They are not created to propose broad structural changes in the health care system (this is the purview of “experts” who know about health care). The committees also provide the ministry of health with valuable access to popular

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<sup>31</sup>Correa, Enrique and Marcela Noe 1998. *Nociones de Una Ciudadania Que Crece* Santiago: FLACSO

<sup>32</sup>Weinstein, Marisa 1998. “Participacion Social en Salud: Acciones en Curso” Santiago: Documento de Trabajo FLACSO

communities and information concerning health care issues in the community. In some municipalities, health care committee leaders sit on the boards and commissions that manage the *consultorios*.<sup>33</sup> In short, health care committees are envisioned as the voice of the community in health care. In practice, however, the influence that they have had sitting on these local boards has been, except for a few noteworthy exceptions, negligible. Their role has primarily been limited to helping the state by filling in the gaps where there is no funding for services.

Occasionally, some of these organizations have engaged in small isolated protests at the ministry of health by staging sit-ins and writing letters to the media exposing abuses of local *consultorio* officials. In terms of their impact on policy, however, the results have been rather paltry. Although these groups have on occasion extracted minor concessions from the state, the cumulative impact of these concessions has not changed the basic dynamics of the health care system, and it has not been able to fundamentally change the institutions of post-authoritarian democracy. Instead of building popular sovereignty, these organizations have more often become a vehicle for state penetration into peripheral communities and for managed forms of participation that shape the agenda.

Indeed, the state often uses these organizations as a conduit to attempt to teach new forms of non-conflictual participation and for defining post-dictatorship citizenship. The ministry of health has been involved in advancing a specific model of participation that is consistent with the model of social participation and with the parameters of citizenship in the neoliberal era. The ministry of health defines social participation in the area of health care as the “intervention of persons, families, groups, social and community organizations, and private institutions in the task of maintaining and fomenting health.”<sup>34</sup> This definition includes activities in support of individual preventative actions, but confines

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<sup>33</sup>Interview with the director of the Consultorio de Lo Espejo. February 16, 2000

<sup>34</sup>Ministerio de Salud 1995. “Participacion Social en el Sistema Publico de Salud: Avances y Desafios” Santiago

participation to these areas and eschews the involvement of groups in broader political debates. This definition, then, gives shape to and defines a certain modality of participation that is broadly consistent with the model of social participation. It consists of citizens taking actions, collectively and individually, to improve health in their community: keep the community clean campaigns, educating residents about what to do in their homes, and carrying out certain tasks that were previously the state's responsibility. In short, it stresses what one scholar has called "civic volunteer"<sup>35</sup> styles of participation that can, somewhat paradoxically, be a catalyst for political apathy.

Excluded from this definition of participation is the notion of citizens taking action to demand that the state allocate more resources to health care, or that the health care rights be expanded. Thus, the model of participation envisioned by this definition is combines the "self-help" model--i.e. citizens taking actions to help themselves, and the "third sector" model--citizens carrying out activities that were previously the responsibility of the state. Both of these models of participation resemble what one scholar<sup>36</sup> has called the "thousand points of light" model, where citizens are encouraged to volunteer, but not to question the policies that are formulated by policymakers:

These officials ask *apolitical* citizen volunteers to fill in for underfunded welfare agencies, saying that such citizenship is more necessary now, in times of cutbacks. But the politicians do not ask the citizens to discuss the political decisions that made the cutbacks.<sup>37</sup>

In practice, this way of operationalizing participation sharply limits the role that citizens can play in publicly shaping the health care agenda. According to the ministry's definition of participation, participation in health care activities does not include popular sovereignty over health care policy. In the third sector model of participation, for example, organizations are contracted by the government to carry out certain specific

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<sup>35</sup>Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* Cambridge University Press

<sup>36</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*ibid.* p.13

tasks. Thus, in practical reality, participation in health care has meant exercising self-reliant forms of citizenship--i.e. collective action that does not place a burden on the state and that depoliticizes the question of health care.

In the chapters that follow we shall look at the inner dynamics of participation by examining the pattern of interactions between municipal governments and grassroots organizations, and by examining the dynamics of interaction between grassroots associations to understand the dynamics of the construction of a culture of political avoidance. We shall also have occasion to examine the ways in which resistance manifests itself in such an environment.



CHAPTER 7  
PUBLIC SPACE, PRIVATE SPACE, AND POPULAR CULTURE IN CHILE'S  
*POBLACIONES* IN THE ERA OF NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM

**Introduction**

This chapter will examine spatial change in popular municipalities in Chile with an eye toward understanding changes in popular culture that impinge on political participation and deliberation. I explore this question by conceptualizing certain spaces as primal scenes<sup>1</sup>--i.e. physical spaces that set the stage for scenes that take place within the context of a particular physical location, and that capture the essence of a particular dimension of social reality. Primal scenes often capture the interactions and the surreptitious struggles that often unfold in plain view and that define a moment.

First, I describe the scenes that unfold in a particular physical location in the *poblacion*,<sup>2</sup> that I call the "*pasaje*." *Pasaje* is a term that refers to the narrow streets and alleyways that define the interior spaces of a *poblacion*. Typically, the streets in a *poblacion* are extremely narrow (often there is barely room for automobiles traveling in one direction). Yet, the physical space constituted by the *pasajes* have been a prime site for the forging of popular culture. The narrow streets, the artesanal self-constructed housing that line the *pasaje* on both sides, the sidewalks, the cracked pavement, the wall murals and graffiti that typically adorns many *pasajes*, all serve to create a particular physical space. More than a mere physical space, the *pasaje* can be understood as creating a socially meaningful space where solidarity is built and where conflict unfolds.

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<sup>1</sup>Berman, Marshall 1982. *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Press

<sup>2</sup>*Poblacion* is a term for urban low income community. These range from shantytowns to lower middle income communities.

The *pasaje*, then, is a spatial representation of a popular culture that is socially constructed. The exchanges and interactions that take place on the *pasajes* transform the space comprised by the *pasaje* into a meaningful place: "The social construction of space is the actual transformation of space--through people's social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting--into scenes and action that convey meaning."<sup>3</sup> Space also serves to produce types of social relations.<sup>4</sup> There is, then, a relationship between space and patterns of human interaction. That is, the way space is organized, distributed, and structured has an impact on the types of interactions that take place.<sup>5</sup> Too, space is a reflection of culture. "Cities...are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images; they in turn shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose our own personal form on them."<sup>6</sup> Finally, space has also been the object of intense struggle over its meaning and use. Indeed, in her study of the *poblacion* La Bandera (also in Santiago), Paley has pointed out that "myths and memories of collective action are highlighted by residents' sense that people living in the *poblacion* have created everything they own."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the space of the *pasaje* contains a reservoir of historical memory.

Too, like Benjamin's<sup>8</sup> Paris Arcades, *pasajes* in the *pobla* can provide us with valuable glimpses into the past. The *pasaje* is shot through with antinomies, tensions, and oppositions that manifest themselves on the stage that is framed by its space. Scenes that are framed by the *pasaje* allow us to excavate below the current tensions and contradictions to examine the articulations of the past and the present. *Pasajes*, then, can be understood as a fragment of social space that shed light on the dynamics of the past and

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<sup>3</sup>Low, Setha 2000. *On the Plaza The Politics of Public Space and Culture* Austin: University of Texas Press p.125

<sup>4</sup>Lefebvre, Henri 1991. *The Production of Space* Oxford: Basil Blackwell

<sup>5</sup>Low, 2000 op.cit.

<sup>6</sup>Raban, Jonathan 1974. *Soft City* London

<sup>7</sup>Paley, Julia 2001. *Marketing Democracy Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* Berkeley: University of California Press p.22

<sup>8</sup>Benjamin, Walter 1999. *The Arcades Project* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

present because they were constructed through historic struggles for identity and representation. Historic struggles for identity and representation act like discursive layers that form part of the popular memory that shapes the way in which the present is read, understood, and acted upon. Finally, the *pasajes* provide the possibility of examining the arrival of neoliberal consumer capitalism from the margins.

Juxtaposed to the *pasaje* is an emerging primal scene that I call the “arrival of the megamarket”: space within popular communities is being transformed by the arrival of the physical monuments of globalized, neoliberal capitalism: the megamarket, the Home Depot, and the shopping mall. Examining the spatial metastasis of the latest “temples of commodity capitalism”—as Benjamin<sup>9</sup> once referred to the arcades—from their origins in wealthy upscale communities into lower income popular *comunas* and their impact on the social norms of the *pasaje* can shed light on the cultural and ideological implications of these changes. The activities that take place in these public spaces can be read for important insights into changes in popular culture that impinge on the development of popular consciousness and of substantive forms of democracy. Indeed, popular culture is increasingly being changed by the malls, the Home Depots and Home Centers, and the megamarkets.

Transformations in the way in which public and private space are used and in the relationship between public and private spaces can provide us with a lens through which to explore these changes. The way space is used also sheds light on the power structure and the conflicts that take place in society.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it also provides a window through which to analyze the shifting dynamics of political struggle.

### **The “*Pasaje*” as a Field**

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<sup>9</sup>Benjamin cited in Buck-Morss, Susan 1991. *The Dialectics of Seeing Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* Cambridge: MIT Press p.83

<sup>10</sup>Low, 2000 op.cit.

The starting point for understanding how the transformation of public space can provide a window for analyzing the impact that neoliberal capitalism is having on popular culture is to understand the significance of everyday activity and interactions that take place in the public spaces of the "*pobla*."<sup>11</sup> The street, as Berman has written, is a space for people to associate: "The essential purpose of the street, which gives it its special character, is sociability: people come here to see and be seen, and to communicate their visions with one another..."<sup>12</sup> The narrow streets and *pasajes* of the *pobla* constitute a primal scene where the tensions that exist within the *pobla*--and between the *pobla* and the dominant--play themselves out. The *pasaje* (and the myriad of spaces within the *pasaje*), then, can be understood as constituting a field: an "arena of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate these different kinds of capital."<sup>13</sup> The *pasaje* is also a field where resistance and counterhegemony coexist in a tenuous and fluctuating balance with domination and hegemony. In the *pobla*, the *pasaje*--with its maze of small shops, kiosks, *boliches*,<sup>14</sup> and even its sidewalks--have traditionally constituted public spaces where people congregate and build the social webs and the culture that characterizes *pasaje* space. The *pasaje* is a space where interpretations and understandings of the world are forged. The *pasaje*, then, is a socially constructed space that has meaning.

Historic struggles for space (home and the infrastructure of community) and its daily use as a space of sociability have given the *pasaje* cultural meaning. The physical space of the *pasaje* tells the story of past struggles that took place in building the community: the uneven nature of housing construction and the partially completed streets

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<sup>11</sup> *Pobla* is an abbreviation for the word *poblacion*. However, the term also encompasses the culture that exists within the physical confines of the *poblacion*.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p.196

<sup>13</sup> Swartz, David 1997. *Power and Culture The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* Chicago p.117

<sup>14</sup> The *boliche* is a small bar that serves beer, wine, and pisco.

and sidewalks reveal the complex patchwork of popular struggle. This uneven physical infrastructure foreshadows the uneven nature of popular culture.

Most people in the *pobla* have generally spent all their lives living in the same *poblacion*, and thus they know each other intimately. Most of the people that I interviewed who lived in *La Pincoya*, *La Victoria*, *Pablo Neruda*, *Patria Nueva*, *Villa Sur* or *Jose Maria Caro*, had either been born there or had lived there since the mid 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the *pobladores* had established deep roots in their communities. Indeed, even many of those who had improved their economic situation and thus had the option of moving out of the *pobla* preferred to stay there instead and improve their home. This permanence is reflected in patterns of homeownership: 63.7% of those surveyed claimed to own their homes, 30.4% identified themselves as “*allegados*” (i.e. families living in the homes of relatives), while only 4.3% identified themselves as renters (N=891). Many of the *allegados* were the children of the original residents of the home, who had gotten married and who to economic circumstances found themselves having to live with their parents. The low percentage of renters indicates low mobility.

The residents of the *pasajes* had been protagonists in, and witnesses to, many changes. They had seen the community evolve from a *callampa* (shantytown) to a *poblacion* (low income community). Many of them had also been the protagonists in the construction of the *pasaje* as a social and cultural space. Beneath the changes that whirled around them--the fall of Allende (and the death of the socialist/populist narrative), the travails of the dictatorship, the arrival of the neoliberal juggernaut, the transition to an uncertain democracy--there were certain elements of continuity: the daily trip to the *negocio* to buy three eggs, five tea bags, or two cigarettes (everything in the *negocio* is sold individually to those who can't afford to buy them in volume) or some other item,

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<sup>15</sup>Geographical mobility seems to be very slowly increasing in Chile.

watering the sidewalk in the mid morning to stop the dust from kicking up, the lunch hour, the trip to the *muni* to see about a particular social service, etc.

Everybody knows each other in the *pobla*, and there are few secrets. I found this out in my first few visits to the *poblaciones*. In many of the *poblaciones* that I visited, when I could not find the home of the person that I was looking for, I only needed to ask the local kiosk owner or store owner where the person that I was looking for lived. When I first met Luzmenia Toro--a community activist in the *poblacion Pablo Neruda*--I got lost looking for her house. I stopped and asked the owner of a small *negocio*<sup>16</sup> if she knew where *pasaje Los Nisperos* was. The *negocio* was located inside a house. The woman behind the counter asked me who it was that I was looking for (street names were irrelevant to her, indeed she did not even know that the *pasaje* that Luzmenia lived on was called *Los Nisperos* street).

"Luzmenia Toro, the president of the *junta de vecinos*," I said.

"Ah, Senora Luzmenia lives over there in the third house on the right side after you go left on the next street...but she's not home now" said the woman behind the counter.

"Do you know where she is?" I asked.

"She went to the *muni*<sup>17</sup>, but she'll be back in about an hour because she has to make lunch for her son." replied the woman.

Not only did the store owner know where Luzmenia lived, she knew her daily routine. In waiting for Luzmenia to return from her trip to the municipality that morning, I struck up a conversation with the woman behind the counter--*Dona Soldedad*--who told me about the community and about the people in the community. Sure enough, about an hour later Luzmenia walked by and Soledad called her in off the sidewalk to meet me.

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<sup>16</sup>Negocios are small stores that are built onto the houses of residents. They sell things like milk, cigarettes, bread, sugar, and other household goods.

<sup>17</sup>muni--popular abbreviation for municipality.

I would often go to that store to wait for Luzmenia to return from somewhere. As I would talk to Dona Soledad, people would stream in and out of the store to buy things. They would greet her--“*Buenos dias, Senora Soledad*”--as they entered the store. The customers that periodically entered the *negocio* also knew each other and greeted each other by name. Often, they would stop to chat for a few minutes before returning to their homes, or they would stroll back together. Some would buy a *cafecito* and stay for a while, sharing gossip with Dona Soledad (or “*Tia Sole*” as I came to call her), and looking out periodically onto the street to see who was coming and going. She replied to almost all of them by name. In short, she knew virtually everyone in the community, and everyone knew *Dona Soledad*. The strategic location of the store, at one of the main entrances to the *poblaciones* La Pincoya and Pablo Neruda in the municipality of Huechuraba, gave Soledad a panoptic vision of daily life in the community. From this vantage point she could see the community clearly and decipher its daily rhythms--she knew when Luzmenia was going to the *muni*, when Lucho was going to see his lover in *Poblacion Patria Nueva*, when Juana was going to work in the *vega*, when Lidia was taking her children to the *consultorio*. She could see people pass by her *negocio* on the way to the *muni*, or to the *consultorio* (the local health care clinic), or to buy things in the stores. She could, in short, see the rhythm of life unfold in the *pobla*.

The example of the store/kiosk owner says a great deal about the dynamics of community in Huechuraba. The *negocio* is one of the many microsites--a space in the *pasaje*--where informal networks of sociability are nourished on a daily basis through the involuntary act of everyday living. These networks seem to arise almost unconsciously out of the routines of everyday life: in the act of going to the *negocio* everyday to buy food, a pattern of association is established within the *negocio*. In one sense the *negocio* could be seen as the physical locus for a complex web of informal association that is not purposive but that is extremely effective in forging community. That is, the interactions in the *negocio* could be seen as a latent form of associational life that can easily be missed in

studies of formal organizations. Other such sites include small restaurants, the neighborhood council center, and the sidewalks and street corners of the *pobla*. The act of going to the *negocio* to buy a few *marraquetas*<sup>18</sup> or some sugar are intimately linked to other forms of social interaction. On the way to the *negocio* and back, a whole range of social interactions take place that establish social bonds. Thus, unlike bourgeois social contexts, where a transaction in the commodified world of a supermarket or a megamarket is merely an economic exchange, in the *pobla*, the trip to the store to purchase a liter of cooking oil is an occasion to socialize, exchange information and chat--people socialized with each other as they encountered each other at the *negocio*.

*Dona Soledad* also extended small lines of credit to those who came to the store. Many times, I would see people come in to the kiosk and say something like "*Senora Sole*, can I get four eggs and some oil, and I will pay you tomorrow, when my husband gets paid?" Many people in the *pobla* had informal credit accounts with *Dona Sole*. Yet, there were no signatures, and no promissory notes to back up these small loans. These accounts were unenforceable by law. They were based strictly on faith. *Soldedad* did not even take note of these transactions. *Dona Soledad* simply trusted them to pay because they lived in the community and because they knew had known each other since the 1960s. As she put it:

In the *pobla* there are no secrets, everybody knows everybody. We all have to live together. I see these people everyday, I grew up with most of the *vecinos*...we built our homes together. When we arrived here this was nothing but vacant land. We lived under plastic carps that the government gave us, and slowly we built our homes by working together and struggling together.

Over the years, in short, both the physical and social infrastructure of the community was forged out of what once was a *callampa*. The dense web of social interactions that

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<sup>18</sup>bread



unfolded in the *negocio* have a historicity behind them: they were forged in the process of building the community.

The interactions that take place at the *negocio* point to the presence of a dispersed, capillary form of social capital--horizontal networks of sociability<sup>19</sup>--that are unintentionally created and become embedded in the informal networks that have been constructed over time and that are nourished in the context of ordinary everyday activities in the *pobla*: the woman sweeping the front of her home will talk to her neighbor who is hanging her clothes out to dry. They will also stop to talk to the grocer on the other side of the *pasaje*, and to the vendor who passes by offering to sharpen knives for a fee. On Saturdays, families will stroll to the nearest park with their children, and sit and talk while the children play. On the way to and from the park, they will stop and talk with their *vecinos*. The narrow *pasajes* of the *pobla*, with their densely packed, non-uniformly constructed houses, and small *negocios* haphazardly interspersed throughout the neighborhood (which are seen by the state as a form of disorder and chaos) constitute a space for building a stock of social capital and community.

These informal, daily conversations on street corners, storefronts, sidewalks, and other public spaces in the *pobla* have served to build dense local networks whose location in social space is defined and framed by the *pasaje*. In short, the *pasaje* has been the site for the creation of a stealthy form of popular civil society that lurks latently beneath the state's radarscreen, but which in times of crisis can quickly become the basis for more organized forms of collective action and mobilization. As we were strolling down a *pasaje* in the *poblacion* Pablo Neruda a municipal bureaucrat pointed to the deceptive nature of what seemed to be the contemporary apathy of the *poblacion*: "These

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<sup>19</sup>Putnam, Robert A. 1993. *Making Democracy Work Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* Princeton University Press

communities seem peaceful now, but if you stir up the chicken coop (*revolver el gallinero*), the *pobla* can quickly become fierce.”

The street, however, does not fit comfortably with bourgeois understandings of civicism, civic culture, and civil society that are embedded in the context of a rigid separation of the private and the public, and that often see the streets as the epitome of incivility. Bourgeois notions of participation are embedded in the context of a strong emphasis on the private. As one scholar writes: “The bourgeois sensibility of civic privatism finds street living disorderly and threatening. In “better” neighborhoods and communities people discreetly and privately sit behind their houses, leaving the streets to the teenagers.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, when viewed through a bourgeois lens, the scenes that unfold on the *pasajes* of the *pobla* can be terribly disconcerting and misleading. What when viewed through the prism of bourgeois culture (and generally seen only fleetingly through the tinted windows of a passing car) is often mistakenly interpreted as “miscreant activity” is upon closer inspection often merely the rich social texture of public space in the *pobla*. The interactions on the *pasaje* can be read as the remnants of the “porosity” of the *pobla*--the absence of the rigid boundaries between public and private, and between the personal and communal--that Benjamin argued characterizes pre-capitalist cityscapes.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, a typical scene on the *pasajes* of the *poblacion* La Victoria or La Pincoya in the late afternoon and evening is of small groups of people on street corners, sidewalks, and in front of *negocios* talking and socializing. In the warm months, or on warm winter days, people can be seen standing in their living rooms with their windows open, or standing in their doorway, talking to someone on the sidewalk in front of their houses. On more than one occasion, I would see people having dinner with their windows open, while they carried on a conversation with people on the *pasaje*. Many times, I had

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<sup>20</sup>Young, Iris Marion 1997. *Intersecting Voices Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* Princeton University Press p.142

<sup>21</sup>Buck-Morss, 1991 op.cit.

conversations with Dona Hilda, who would talk to me through her dining room window while having her *tecito y pan* (tea and bread). These conversations can last for an hour or more. The line between public space (the *pasaje*) and private space (the dining room) becomes blurred. Since houses are too small and overcrowded, and cars do not often circulate through the narrow *pasajes* in the *pobla*,<sup>22</sup> people generally socialized on the sidewalk or the street, or in a space between the home and the street. Children also play their *pichanga* (street soccer) while these social interactions took place.

In contrast to the *pasaje*, bourgeois notions of community, civicness, and association are much more regimented, structured, and formalized. Meetings in a typical middle or upper class community take place at specific times, and the rules governing associational meetings are rigidly enforced and formatted. This is reflected in many of the standard indicators that are often used to measure civic participation: membership in formal organizations, number of times attending meetings, number of hours at meetings, engagement in specific activities (such as letter writing, campaigning), etc.<sup>23</sup> In the *pobla*, on the other hand, the texture of associational life on the streets and in the *negocios* is much more informal, spontaneous, and fluid. Associational life exhibits the same porosity that blurs the line between public and private space. Residents will often meet with their municipal representative or the neighborhood council president on the *pasaje*, or in front of her house. Nevertheless, the informal gatherings on the narrow *pasajes* are spaces for association, sociability, conflict and resolution of conflict.

The *pasaje* has at crucial periods in history emerged to constitute an important physical site for the development of a subaltern counterpublic--"discursive arenas where members of subordinate social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate

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<sup>22</sup>This is rapidly changing as the pavement of streets and the growing accessibility of cars is rapidly increasing the number of cars on the streets of many *poblaciones*.

<sup>23</sup>Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba 1989. *The Civic Culture Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* Newbury Park: Sage

oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."<sup>24</sup> The *pasaje*, then, has emerged at critical times to become the subaltern equivalent of the coffee house and the salon in Habermas' bourgeois public sphere.<sup>25</sup> *Pasaje* sociability and forms of association have at times been the midwife of powerful social movements. Indeed, it is from this substrate of sociability that organizations emerged in many *poblaciones* to become the building blocks of a popular movement during the 1980s to confront the travails of the dictatorship.

*Pasaje* sociability and community solidarity--i.e. what Harvey has called community consciousness<sup>26</sup>--that was forged on the *pasajes* during the period of formation of the *poblaciones* became linked to complex combinations of Marxist, populist, Catholic, and conservative narratives of the late 1950s and 1960s to produce a vibrant subaltern counterpublic that articulated the struggles of the community for space within the broader discursive framework of class struggle. That is, during the period from the mid 1950s until 1973, the struggle for space and home became deeply imbricated with national level contests for power that were backed by the discourses of Marxist, populist, and Catholic social action. Thus, through their linkage to these discourses, local struggles to build viable communities acquired a broader meaning. Key aspects of citizenship, such as participation and collective action became embedded in a specific matrix of meaning during this period. The intersection of these two arenas--the local and the national--produced a vibrant subaltern counterpublic.

Fragmented remnants of the complex articulations of popular culture and elite discourse can be seen in wall art in the *pobla* that glorifies these past struggles. These

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<sup>24</sup>Fraser, Nancy 1992. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Craig Calhoun (editor) Cambridge: MIT Press 1992 p.123

<sup>25</sup>Habermas, Jurgen 1991. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* Cambridge: MIT Press

<sup>26</sup>Harvey, David 1985. *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

murals can be read as hieroglyphs of the past that continue to exert a force on the present as the *pasaje* world collectively struggles to come to terms with the onslaught of the plastic, Mickey Mouse, consumer culture that is the narcotic superstructure of late twentieth century capitalism. These narratives make up a somewhat faded, but uneffaced, layer of cultural sediment that partly defines the social and physical landscape of the *pasaje*. In Marxian<sup>27</sup> terms, it is a past that continues to weigh on the brains of the living: this complex amalgam still makes up an important part of the memory and practices of the *pasaje*. There is a deep nostalgia for the past in the *pasaje*,<sup>28</sup> but that is counterbalanced by a rush to embrace the present.

The *pasaje* also created complex webs through which information flows to the community. *Dona Sole* told me, for example, that during the 1980s when Pinochet's security forces would come to the *poblacion* seeking to detain a community activist, the *negocio* acted like a beacon that informed the community that the "*tiras*"<sup>29</sup> were entering the *pobla*. *Dona Sole's* *negocio* acted like an early warning station that in several instances allowed activists to evade detention. Her panoptic vision of the main entrance to the *pobla* from the center allowed her to quickly spot intruders. She would tell her neighbor in the house behind the *negocio*, who then spread the news to the rest of the *pobla* through the street grapevine. The *pobla* was able to mobilize quickly to organize resistance to this incursion. Social capital that is embedded in the deep fabric of the community is crucial because it can be mobilized quickly in times of crisis.

Furthermore, much can be gleaned about the politics of the *pobla* by listening to the conversations that take place in these spaces. As neoliberal commodity capitalism penetrates the *pobla*, the conversations on the streets of the *pobla* have become more and more depoliticized as the gaze of the *pobladores* has become increasingly fixated on the

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<sup>27</sup> Marx, Karl 1980 (1872) *Manifesto of the Communist Party* New York: Vintage Books

<sup>28</sup> Paley, 2001 op.cit.

<sup>29</sup> *tiras* is slang for undercover police.

glittery world of consumer capitalism that enters into their homes through the television set and through the arrival of the world of the megamarket (to be explored in the next primal scene).

This "street" social capital, however, is of a form that is generally unaccounted for in studies of democracy, democratization, and civiness because it does not emerge from the act of formally associating for a specific purpose--bird watching, playing soccer, choral singing, etc. The *negocio* and the street corner are not formally listed as an association in municipal registries of organizations. Indeed, bourgeois society frowns on such porosity. Yet, nodal points such as the *negocio*, the kiosk, or the street corner, can often create dense horizontal networks of sociability and solidarity.<sup>30</sup>

### **Hegemonic Struggles: The Antinomies of the *Pasaje***

Many studies of shantytowns and popular communities in Chile have conveyed (perhaps unintentionally) an image of the *poblaciones* as a site for mobilization, resistance, and counterhegemony or, alternatively, as a space of apathy and quiescence. The image that is created is often of a social space that moves as a unified whole. Beneath the generally polite interactions among residents in the spaces of the *pasaje*, there is an intense struggle underway that is often masked by the harmony and politeness of daily routine. The *pasajes* of the *poblaciones*, however, are a site for the working out of a constant tension between hegemony and counterhegemony, between conformity and resistance, between an acceptance and a rejection of dominant values. These contradictions coexist within the same social and physical space in a dynamic tension. The *pasajes* are not an undifferentiated whole, but instead are a dynamic and fragmented entity whose identity and practices are constantly being negotiated. Community, as one scholar reminds us, is a

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<sup>30</sup>Jacobs, Jane 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* New York: Vintage Books

cultural space in which identities are contested and negotiated.<sup>31</sup> There is a quiet struggle for hegemony that takes place within the space of community at the level of culture.

Beneath the harmonious appearance of community that a cursory glance at the *pasajes* can create, a deeply engrained tension within the *poblacion* pits a strong conservative and conformist undercurrent (with a long historical trajectory) that is indelibly etched in the social interstices and subjectivity of the *pobla* (and which seeks to emulate and mimic the dominant culture) against a popular/radicalized tendency that rejects many aspects of dominant culture. The conversations that take place in the public spaces of the *pasaje* give little hint at the struggle that is taking place beneath the surface. The *pasaje*, in short, is like an alloy that on the surface is smooth, but the interstices below the surface are full of cracks and fissures.

The conservative/conformist thread that runs through the *pasaje* is linked to dominant discourses that view the world of the street, of informal association, and other popular forms of sociability and collective action as markers of improper behavior and as “*roto*,” and as representative of “the chaos and the dark call of passions,” and the uncivilized “*indio*”<sup>32</sup> (indian) that dominant elites have defined to be pillars of popular culture and behavior, and which has been internalized in the fragmented consciousness of popular culture. This conservative undercurrent can trace its roots to narratives that date back to the 17th century, when the rural poor in Chile were stereotyped in aristocratic and elite circles as “misunderstood vagabonds, and as *potential delinquents*.”<sup>33</sup>

Over time, this narrative has evolved and been refined, but its core social construction--the poor as forever teetering on the brink of delinquency (and hence in need of reform)--remains. In the early 1900s, the lower classes were resurrected by an

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<sup>31</sup>Mallon, Florencia 1995. *Peasant and Nation The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>32</sup>indio (indian) is a term that is used to refer to someone who is out of control, or who is extremely agitated.

<sup>33</sup>Salazar, Gabriel 2000. *Labradores, Peones y Proletarios* Santiago: LOM Ediciones p.27

emerging middle class and a literary generation--the generation of 1900--that found the essence of *Chilenidad* (Chilean identity) among the lower classes.<sup>34</sup> By the 1960s, Catholic social doctrines had led to the development of *promocion popular*, a program that sought to integrate the marginalized *callampas* (shantytowns) that existed on the periphery of Santiago into the mainstream of Chilean society. The Pinochet dictatorship can be seen as representing a "moment of departure"<sup>35</sup> for conservative discourse for two reasons: it was a moment when traditional conservative narratives encountered the discourse of the Chicago school and second, because the national conjuncture opened new space in the *pasajes* for reformulated conservative narratives. In the post-authoritarian period, vestiges of these early narratives can be found lurking in the subtext of the academic discourse that undergirds policies to combat poverty and build civic communities.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, these new elite discourses dragged with them the baggage of their articulations with the past. New variations of the theme of the poor as potential delinquents have been added: the potential for violent, irrational upheaval and for the destruction of democracy (i.e. the lower classes as a threat to national security). Thus, a newfound admiration for lower class ways has frequently been coupled with an impulse to engage in social engineering that would eliminate the more noxious elements of the *pasaje*.

Over time, then, the narrative that defines the popular classes--the *pasaje*--as potential delinquents and as threats to the established order has been transformed, modernized, sanitized, and democratized: yet even today, standing on the street in a group

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<sup>34</sup>Bar-Melej 2001. *Reforming Chile Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press

<sup>35</sup>Chatterjee, Partha 1986. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

<sup>36</sup>Thus, the *concertacion*, as we have seen, could state as one of its objectives in combating poverty is the transformation of popular culture.



(gang) and talking in an urban *poblacion* is seen in elite discourse as potential delinquent activity. It was in part for this reason (as well as reasons of “state security”) that during the dictatorship, anti-loitering laws were decreed that forbade people to stand on the streets in groups. The dictatorship saw the social world of the *pasaje* as disorder. Many of the activities that define the *pasaje* were not only a potential security problem, but were also seen as among the more nefarious cultural traits that were nurtured on the *pasajes* of the *poblaciones*, and which on this view produced misery, poverty and disorder. Indeed, newspaper articles still proclaim *poblacion* La Victoria to be lawless territory where not even “the state dares to venture.”<sup>37</sup> In elite circles, as I discovered, the *pasajes* of the *pobla* are still seen as a foreboding space: I was always being admonished to be careful whenever I went to the *poblaciones*.

These dominant narratives and discourses--which are rooted in a conceptualization of the poor as potential delinquents--have burrowed their way into the cultural unconsciousness of the *pobla* and have become internalized through socialization as one of the foundational pillars of the conservative/conformist thread that lurks within the *pasaje*. In other words, dominant narratives have become internalized at the level of everyday common sense that has come to structure everyday behavior in the *poblacion* at a level below consciousness. Among certain segments of the *pasaje*, then, dominant narratives have acquired what Bourdieu calls the capacity for symbolic violence--“the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in *taken-for-granted forms*.”<sup>38</sup> Dominant narratives have become an important component of the medium that shapes individual and collective behavior in the *pasaje*.

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<sup>37</sup>El Mercurio May 11, 2000 p.C5

<sup>38</sup>Swartz, op. cit. 1997 p.89

Public schools, Churches, and other public institutions became the localized and dispersed sites for inculcating--through techniques of discipline--some of the values of dominant elites among the lower classes. Through public education, for example, the Chilean state has been crucial in inculcating certain modes of citizenship and political behavior.<sup>39</sup> "To govern is to educate and every good political system is a true educational system" wrote Valentin Letelier in his work *La Lucha Por la Cultura* (the struggle for culture) that advocated state-run schooling as the basis for forming good citizens. Thus, spaces like schools were disciplinary spaces that gave rise to a deep-structuring cultural matrix that operates below the level of consciousness.

Contemporary manifestations of these conservative narratives in the political realm can most clearly be seen in the attitudes on the *pasaje* toward the protests and uprisings that took place in many *poblaciones* in the 1980s. If many *pobladores* remember the 1980s protests with nostalgia because of the protagonic role it gave them and because participating in the protests gave them a sense of empowerment,<sup>40</sup> it is also true that many people in the *pasaje* remember the protests of the 1980s as a period of tremendous disorder and chaos. One man in Villa Wolf explained how when the organizers of the protests in his *poblacion* came and asked him to participate, he told them that "the people on this block are not a band of *rotos* who like to break things and create disorder." Others described how the protesters trashed their communities, and brought nothing but anarchy and chaos to the *pasaje*. One woman, a neighborhood council president, equated protest with the actions of a disorganized rabble--what she called the "lumpen" (the lumpenproletariat).

Those who protested were the *lumpen* who have nothing better to do with their time. All those *cumas* did was to create disorder. They don't have any culture or education because they come from families who didn't teach them how to behave. I told them that I would call the *carabineros* if they built a

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<sup>39</sup>Bar-Melej, 2001 op.cit.

<sup>40</sup>Paley, 2001 op. cit.

barricade, and I forbade my children from participating in such *roterias*. One has to know how to behave. Those who protest like that are just a bunch of *delinquentes* (delinquents).

More militant forms of citizenship--marches, demonstrations, building barricades, etc.--are seen through this lens as the actions of the uneducated *roto*. They are understood, then, not as an expression of citizenship, but as the delinquent activities of the uncivilized *roto*.

Indeed, if one could have hovered over the *poblaciones* in a helicopter and viewed the labyrinth of *pasajes* in the *poblaciones* from above in the early 1980s, it would have been possible to see a spatially segregated maze of protest and quiescence that graphically underscores the existence of a tension between radicalized and conservative narratives. The quiltlike tapestry of quiescence and protest further underscores the fact that these tensions have a complex spatial dimension that reflects distinct historical trajectories. Beneath the tapestry, then, lay complex historical discursive formations and articulations.

Some *poblaciones* became the site of intense confrontations between security forces and residents on the *pasajes*, while neighboring *poblaciones* stood by on the sidelines and watched. In the municipality of Huechuraba, the *pasajes* of Poblacion La Pincoya, Pablo Neruda and Patria Nueva became the scene of frequent and often intense battles between security forces and *pobladores*, while adjacent Villa Wolf remained quiescent. The *pasajes* of *poblacion* La Victoria--then in the municipality of San Miguel--became a veritable battleground, a maze of trenches and barricades where police and security forces encountered fierce resistance, while across *Avenida La Feria*, residents of Poblacion El Manantial stood by and watched the confrontations in La Victoria unfold.<sup>41</sup> In the municipality of La Cisterna--the residents of *poblacion* Clara Estrella watched from the windows of their homes, while across the streets that border the *poblacion* to their north and south, *poblaciones* Santa Adriana and Santa Olga

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<sup>41</sup>Interview with Gloria Rodriguez, neighborhood council president of Poblacion La Victoria, February 2000. This was confirmed in an interview with the president of the neighborhood council of El Manantial.

sandwiched them in protest and rebellion on either side.<sup>42</sup> This quiltlike patchwork of contradictions, which gives expression to the tension between radicalism and conformism, and between different understandings of citizenship, repeated itself throughout the periphery of Santiago. Indeed, within the same *poblacion* there was a conflict over whether or not to protest: in *poblacion* Jose Maria Caro, certain sectors were highly mobilized and active, whereas other sectors refused to participate in such “disorder:”

Over there in sector F, they dug trenches and threw molotov cocktails at the police, but over here we didn't get involved in such things because they create too much disorder. The people in that sector are always involved in some kind of delinquency...<sup>43</sup>

In the *pasajes* of the more quiescent *poblaciones*, the term *poblador* itself--which has its origins in the land occupations on the 1960s--was appropriated in ways that were consistent with a conservative understanding of the world, and with an identity that was supportive of the existing social hierarchy. Community activists associated with the Christian Democratic party, for example, appropriated the term and redefined *pobladores* as those people that have been marginalized on the periphery of urban space.<sup>44</sup> As appropriated in the context of this idiom, the term *poblador* was stripped of those qualities that imbued the *pasaje* with its heterotopian hue. This understanding of *poblador* entails no radical, utopian understanding of society as it did in its original usage. Instead, *pobladores* are enjoined to participate in organizations that seek solutions to problems that are within the existing social order. They are also enjoined to reject the attempts of political parties to manipulate their organizations for political benefit, and to “rescue those organizations that are being instrumentalized for political purposes.”<sup>45</sup> (This was a tacit

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<sup>42</sup>Interview with Irma Otorala, president of the neighborhood council of Poblacion Clara Estrella September, 1999

<sup>43</sup>Interview with Elizabeth Pena, president of the neighborhood council Las Torres, poblacion Jose Maria Caro. Jose Maria Caro is divided into different sectors. Interviews with community leaders from different sectors of the poblacion Jose Maria Caro reveal these different attitudes toward participation in the protests.

<sup>44</sup>Declaracion de Principios y Estatutos del Movimiento Poblacional Solidaridad Unpublished Document

<sup>45</sup>Movimiento Poblacional Solidaridad *Siete Anos de Solidaridad en Chile* Santiago: 1990

reference to base level organizations that were associated with the communist party). Thus, a radicalized identity was appropriated and used to delegitimize its original meaning.

The conservative undercurrent also has more contemporary manifestations that can be seen in everyday conversations on the *pasajes* of the *pobla*. I often heard *pobladores* use the language of the dominant that sees the poor as potential delinquents to refer to their own neighbors as “*rotos*” or as “*sinverguenzas*” (those with no shame) because they constantly go to the municipality and demand things or because they organize marches and protests: “All she does is go to the municipality and beg for things,” said one woman in reference to her neighbor who was on her way to the *muni* to ask for help in paying her electric bill, “she doesn’t understand that you have to work for things...that is why I tell you that here in the *pobla* there is very little culture.” Participation in community organizations is seen as an activity for those who are not capable of doing things on their own, or for those who seek to take advantage of the system.

Standing on the streets and talking in the afternoon or evening is also seen by some in the *poblacion* as a “*roteria*.” As one woman put it:

Instead of standing around talking and wasting time, they could be doing something. People who drive by see them on the streets wasting time and we all get a bad name. I don’t have time for that, I work for a living. All they do is make disorder and give the *pobla* a bad name.<sup>46</sup>

There is a deep preoccupation with the image that these people project to outsiders, with as Chileans say “*el que diran*” (what will people say).

Others remembered the hard hand of the dictatorship with a certain nostalgia because the curfew forced people to be off the streets:

My general organized the *chacra*. People were too *uncivilized*. There were too many *indios* running around. Pinochet brought peace and tranquility. When there was a curfew, people had to be inside and not on the

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<sup>46</sup>Interview with resident of Poblacion Patria Nueva, Huechuraba.

streets causing disorder and being uncivilized.<sup>47</sup>

One of the terms that was used in justifying Pinochet's rule was "organizing the pig sty" (*ordenar la chacra*), which is used in reference to the argument that the dictatorship brought order to an otherwise uncivilized society. One woman even gave thanks to Pinochet because when there was a curfew the women "didn't have to go drag their husbands out of the bar" to get them to come home at night. She went on to explain that now that there is no curfew, many women find themselves once again having to go to the *boliche* to drag their husbands home at night. "The people around here," she said, "need to be treated with *mano dura* (an iron fist) because if not they get out of control."

On one particular summer evening in La Pincoya, as two people quarreled loudly on the sidewalk at a street corner, a woman that I was talking to apologized to me for their behavior. She made the point that this type of behavior is what gives the people in the *pobla* a bad name. She also argued that there is a tremendous lack of culture and education in the *poblacion*. "People" she said, "don't know how to behave...this is why we have to have a man like Pinochet. If people knew how to behave, then Pinochet would not have been necessary." In short, a General Pinochet was needed to tame the uncivilized *indios* in the *pasaje* who did not know how to behave socially and politically.

Furthermore, certain sectors of *poblaciones* are defined by the residents themselves as "bad" areas, while others are defined as "good" areas. Thus, the sector of the *poblacion* that is across the street is seen as a bad sector (*sector malo*)--where the "rotos" who give the community a bad name live. The people on one *pasaje* would tell me not to go two *pasajes* down, because the people that live there are *rotos*.

An archaeology of these comments would reveal that they have a long historical trajectory and are ultimately rooted in the 17th century narratives of the "delinquent vagabond and peon" and the uncivilized *indio*. That is, contemporary conservative

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<sup>47</sup>Interview with resident of Poblacion La Pincoya, Huechuraba.

discourses bear the imprint of the past. It was to this already existing conservative underbelly in the *pasajes* that Pinochet's ultra conservative discourse of order, privatism, work, conservative family values, and rationality appealed. Evidence that it resonated and articulated with important sectors of the *poblaciones* can be found in election data, where in many *poblaciones* upwards of 40% of the electorate voted for the dictatorship in the 1988 plebiscite. These votes cannot be dismissed as entirely the product of fear.

Different narratives and discourses are also linked to distinct understandings of what constitute appropriate and valid practices of citizenship. Two distinct understandings of citizenship coexist in a dynamic tension within the *pasaje*. These different conceptualizations of citizenship can be seen in attitudes toward different forms of political action: 66.3% of respondents argued that petitioning (*medidas de tramite*) was the best way to accomplish political objectives, while 33.4% believed that collective struggle (*medidas de lucha*) is the best way to accomplish political objectives (N=1002). Furthermore, 79.3% of those who saw petitioning as the best way to accomplish political objectives tended to see protesting, marching, and other forms of disruptive collective action as outside the bounds of proper behavior: "With that (protest, marches) all we get is disorder and chaos and we don't get anywhere..."

When juxtaposed to the radicalized discourses that also circulate on the *pasaje*, then, the conservative underbelly points to the contradictory and ambivalent nature of popular culture and the fractured topography of subaltern consciousness: "Popular culture is contradictory since it embodies and elaborates dominant symbols and meanings, but also contests, challenges, rejects, values and presents alternatives to these."<sup>48</sup> The constant struggle between dominant narratives and militant consciousness that unfolds on the *pasaje* is critical to understanding the dynamics of hegemony and domination because

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<sup>48</sup>Joseph, Gilbert M. and Daniel Nugent 1994. "Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico" *Everyday Forms of State Formation Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds.) Durham: Duke University Press p.22

it suggests that key building blocks of hegemony (and counter-hegemony) are constructed within the *pasaje* itself, often in the absence of the overt presence of the powerholders (although they are always present in latent form). Hegemony, then, is a problematic, contested political process of domination and struggle. One of the spaces where this struggle unfolds is on the *pasajes* of the *pobla* within the community itself. The community exists in tension with itself. In short, the culture forged in the field framed by *pasaje* space is shot through with contradictions and tensions. The conformist/conservative undercurrent stands in constant tension and negotiation with the counterhegemonic impulse of the *pasaje* world that was formed from a complex amalgam of Marxist/populist/Catholic narratives and discourses.

An important dimension of hegemony is not the absence of conflict, but the shaping and molding of the ways in which conflict manifests itself. On one level the *pasaje* constitutes a spatial-cultural field where a hegemonic struggle for legitimation between the forces of conformism and radicalism are constantly taking place. This struggle for legitimation takes place according to informal rules that comprise a species of doxa that sets limitations and parameters on the forms that the struggle may take. That is, what could be called an etiquette of struggle has been constructed in the *pasaje* that has been in part shaped by the lessons of the past: the late 1960s and early 70s are seen as a period of when struggle got out of control, leading to the dictatorship. The lesson is that if conflict exceeds certain bounds, someone will step in to restore order. This etiquette, however, has over time become embedded in the unconscious realm of practice. The locus of hegemony, then, is found in a subjectivity that is constructed in multiple sites—one of these sites is the *pasaje*.

### **The Deep Matrix of Hegemony: “*Igual Hay Que Trabajar*”**

Beneath the ongoing low intensity (and often unconscious) struggle to define the social and political practices of the *pasaje*, there is an even deeper logic: the *pasaje* is also a space that places in relief a particular regime of discipline whose underlying dynamic is



captured in the phrase: “*igual hay que trabajar*” (we still must work). Many times, when I asked people why they did not participate in political activities or in social organizations, they answered with a refrain that over time would become distressingly familiar: “*igual hay que trabajar*.” In this context, the phrase is used to make the point that participation in politics will not change the status quo: the people in the *poblacion* will still have to get up every morning and find a way to make ends meet. As one middle aged man in *poblacion* Patria Nueva succinctly explained it:

What does one get by participating in politics?...we still must work to fill the pot (*para la olla*)...that will never change. I still have to work all day... tell me, what politician is going to change that? This will never change, so I have to find a way to feed my family.

This statement can be read at various levels: it underscores the agonizing collapse of the utopian visions contained in Marxism, populism, and Catholic social doctrines. It also reveals a certain sense of powerlessness to change the course of events. It indicates that at some level, there is an understanding of the exploitative nature of the current social order. Too, it mirrors the discourse of neoliberalism that stresses that there are no free lunches and that the only way to get ahead is to work.

Lurking beneath the statement that “I still have to work all day”, however, can be found the outlines of a regime of discipline that runs through the entire social tapestry of the *pasajes*: a form of capillary, indeterminate power that is embedded in popular subjectivity and that emulates the rules for social behavior established by the dominant. A Foucaultian<sup>49</sup> form of capillary, dispersed power reveals itself in the daily rhythms of the social life of the *pobla*. Foucault dispensed with centralized notions of power in favor of a bottom up approach to the analysis of power. He argued that we should conduct

an ascending analysis of power, starting from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been

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<sup>49</sup>Foucault, Michel 1977. *Discipline and Punish The Birth of the Prison* New York: Vintage Press

invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination.<sup>50</sup>

On this reading, power and social control not so much external and prohibitive, but instead are internal and productive:

Discipline works not from the outside but from within, not at the level of an entire society but at the level of detail, and not by constraining individuals and their actions but by producing them. Disciplines work locally...<sup>51</sup>

The *pasaje* has its own internal order that is rooted in a subjectivity that has been forged in a myriad of fragmented and localized sites: the interior of the family, the factory floor, the pews of the Church, the schools,<sup>52</sup> and on the very streets of the *pasajes* that have at times emerged to produce counterhegemony.

Yet, when viewed from a panoptic standpoint--i.e. as we ascend the ladder of power--the *pasaje* moves, almost unconsciously, to the rhythms imposed by the structures and exigencies of capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism creates a "structuring structure" that shapes an unconscious pattern of behavior that can be seen in the rhythmic flow of activity on the *pasaje*. That is, at this level, the fragmented disciplinary spaces of the church, the school, the factory floor, and the municipal office coalesce into class based domination. These rhythms, then, reveal a deeper logic that works at a level beneath the tensions and contradictions of the hegemonic struggle between dominant and popular narratives. This deeper level can be understood as a habitus that is "collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor."<sup>53</sup> It is, in effect, an almost unconscious level of domination:

The effects of domination are always exerted through a set of specific institutions and mechanisms, of which the specifically linguistic policy of the state and even the overt interventions of pressure groups form only the most

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<sup>50</sup>Foucault, Michel 1980. *Power/Knowledge* New York: Pantheon p.159

<sup>51</sup>Mitchell, Timothy 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect" *State/Culture State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* George Steinmetz (ed.) Ithaca: Cornell University Press

<sup>52</sup>Bar-Melej, 2001 op. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Bourdieu, Pierre 1995. *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Cambridge University Press p.72

superficial aspect.<sup>54</sup>

The rhythm of the *pasaje* reflects the almost unconscious dimension of domination: in the early morning hours, the *pasajes* take on one appearance as men (and increasingly a growing number of women) head to the bus stops on their way to make a living: they are off to factories, to the supermarkets, the restaurants, and the high-rises, or to the streets to sell things on the informal economy. The act of getting up to go to work and eke out a living in an economy whose rules are structured by the dominant is not consciously planned out or thought of, it is merely common sense: “*igual hay que trabajar*”. Yet, the imperative of “*igual hay que trabajar*” shapes the social landscape of the *pasaje*. Indeed, habitus “transforms social and economic necessity into virtue by leading individuals into a kind of immediate submission to order.”<sup>55</sup> At this level, then, what Marx once referred to as the “dull compulsion” of economic relationships operates to shape and mold the *pasaje*.

After a lull of about an two hours or so, by midmorning the *pasajes* begin to come to life again as the *negocios* open and women emerge from their homes to “*parar la olla*” (literally “stand the pot”)--i.e. to make the home and the community work. They busily walk around the *negocios* buying things with which to prepare lunch and “*onces*” (the afternoon tea) and talking with the *negocio* owners and their *vecinos*. Others, primarily women, are on their way to DIDECO--the community development offices of the municipality--or to the local primary health care clinic to see a social worker about social services or an appointment with a doctor for their children. In the midmorning hours, DIDECO becomes an important social space as people go there seeking answers to problems that range from problems paying utility bills to complaints about the lack of infrastructure, to applying for welfare benefits (programs for poor families--nutrition for children, housing subsidies, work training programs, retirement pensions, etc.). The

<sup>54</sup>Bourdieu, Pierre 1995. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press p.50

<sup>55</sup>Bourdieu, Pierre 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press

municipality has become the space to apply for welfare benefits. The issues that people bring to the municipality range from personal problems to collective issues that affect the community. During the midmorning hours, municipal offices are buzzing with people seeking answers to problems: community leaders, urban planners, bureaucrats, and welfare recipients interact on a daily basis. The offices of municipal government--as we shall see in subsequent chapters--has emerged to one of the "infinitesimal mechanisms" of power, with its own distinct mechanisms and trajectory.

The transfer of many government services to the municipalities, moreover, has reduced the number of people traveling to downtown Santiago to seek solutions to their problems. Deconcentration and decentralization have changed patterns of social interaction and organization as people become increasingly disconnected from other communities and embedded within their own *muni*. In the community development office, neighbors encounter each other in the little patio in the middle of the building and stop to chat and exchange information about different social programs: which ones are available, how to apply for them, who to contact, etc. There is even a small kiosk in the patio of DIDECO where community leaders, organizers, and citizens gather in small groups to have a Coke or a cup of coffee and chat while they wait for a particular social worker or official to arrive. Going to the *muni*, in short, has become a part of the daily rhythm of life in the *pobla*--the streets that lead from the *pobla* to the *muni* have become a well worn path.

Unemployed men, meanwhile, hang out at the local *boliche* (bar) to drink cheap wine and share their pain--to "*matar la hora*" (kill time)--as one of them told me. Inside the *boliche* is a television set that is constantly on. Images flash across the screen bringing glimpses of the globalized world of MTV, CNN and E! into the *boliche*. Next to the *boliche* is a Teletrak franchise for placing bets on the horse races at the *Club Hipico*. People from the *pasaje* would not be allowed into the *Club Hipico*, but through modern

technology they can bet on the races from a distance so that the elites do not have to share the same physical space with the *rotos*.

Unemployed youths stand on street corners, leaning up against walls, talking with their *compadres* (friends) and smoking the occasional joint as they listen to the “rock and pop” music station. One image still stands in my mind: a group of unemployed youths, dressed in imitation Oakley sunglasses, faded Levis jeans, worn Nike or Reebok tennis shoes, one wearing a “Chicago Giants” tee shirt, were painting a wall mural as I passed by on my way to a meeting. When I passed by a few hours later, I was able to see the image that they had been painting: an image of Che Guevara exhorting the “*pueblo*” (the people) to continue the struggle, while the people respond “*a la orden, comandante*” (at your command). The juxtaposition of the young men wearing the outward cultural look of late twentieth century capitalism while painting what seemed to an anachronistic image of Che serves to underscore the complex and contradictory articulations between post-transition consumer culture and the historical narratives that were instrumental in the forging of community. It also captures an important dynamic that has been taking place in the post-transition period: the overwhelming of *pasaje* culture by an avalanche of consumer goods that bring with it the trappings of postmodernity. While these items have done little in real terms (the man wearing the Oakleys is still poor), they have served to anesthetize popular consciousness.

In the afternoon and evening the streets take on a different appearance as men begin to return home from work, tired after a long day. Some have walked for miles around the streets of Santiago selling things that range from bic lighters to ice-creams to small tools and kitchen utensils. Others have spent the day toiling in the service sector of Santiago’s economy--in an office as a file clerk, as a busdriver or taxi driver, or as or as a janitor cleaning the toilets of the gleaming high-rises and wide avenues in the wealthy districts of Vitacura and Las Condes that Pinochet’s Chicago Boys built with capital from

retirement funds and health care premiums. They have been away from home since just before sunrise, and in only twelve hours, they will have to repeat the cycle.

In the early evening, the streets also take on another aspect as the streets and *pasajes* become for many a space for association and conversation. Small groups of four or five people stand in the street in front of their houses talking as the sun slowly melts away behind the snowcapped Andes. Increasingly, however, as we shall see, people are retreating into the interior of their homes to sit on the couch and watch the television. At times conflict also is evident on the streets of the *pobla* as occasionally neighbors quarrel and hurl insults at each other.

At nighttime, the streets become empty, dark and scary. People have to go to sleep to repeat the cycle. Many people still go inside early, perhaps the legacy of the long years of curfew during the dictatorship. The streets can be very dangerous at night, as I found out one night taking the bus at around midnight after a long meeting of the *Union Comunal*. I was approached by two men who "solicited" a fee for using the public space in the *pobla*. They told me it was a consumption fee (*peaje del consumo*). I gave them 1,000 pesos (about two dollars), which satisfied them. If I did not voluntarily give them what they wanted, they explained to me that they would use force (like the state).

These scenes of the daily rhythms of life on the streets of the *poblacion* reveal both the latent presence of the social capital needed to mobilize the community and resist. It is from this dense network of sociability that associations and resistance emerged in the 1980s. Paradoxically, it is these same social networks that squelch impulses toward resistance. Thus, at the same time, these rhythms can be viewed as a form of order that lies beneath what would seem to be an anarchic topography. They also reveal the capillary and dispersed nature of a power that acts almost imperceptibly to produce certain behaviors that define the daily life of the *pobla*.

Despite the ongoing and relentless metastasis of neoliberal conceptualizations of space and order that are slowly transforming these primal scenes--through the increasing

privatization and rationalization of space that undermines the social ecology of the *negocio*--deep in the interior of the *pobla*, where the neoliberal juggernaut has not yet quite wrapped its long tentacles completely around these social spaces, the streets and *pasajes* can still be seen as harboring an antithesis to the neoliberal, bourgeois street (where people are absent because they are ordered and compartmentalized in enclosed, privatized and sanitized spaces: home, the mall, or the car).

### The Arrival of the Megamarket

The second primal scene that I wish to explore is what I call the "arrival of the megamarket," which provides a metaphor for the penetration of the cultural infrastructure of late capitalism into the social world of the *pasaje*. The megamarket (i.e. the Wal-Mart, and the Home Depot) can be seen as the physical spearhead of commodity capitalism's blitzkrieg into popular *comunas*. Examples of the penetration of popular social spaces by the commodified world of malls, megamarkets, and McDonald's abound: the *Plaza Lo Oeste*--a mall built in Maipo and located scarcely a few blocks from *Villa Lo Sierra* and *Campamento Las Turbinas*, a squatter's settlement built over a drainage ditch--the Home Depots, the megamarkets that are being built in popular communities, etc. While there are still many *poblaciones* whose inner spaces remain relatively insulated from the neoliberal, commodified juggernaut, these spaces are steadily shrinking in the face of the spatial advance of neoliberalism whose logic is captured by the megamarket.

Since the end of the 1980s, a particular form of capitalism--neoliberal commodity capitalism--has been metastasizing into popular communities and transforming the public space in which popular communities--i.e. the *pasaje*--was built. Late twentieth century capitalism has two salient characteristics: economically it is characterized by a transition from Fordism to "flexible accumulation"<sup>56</sup> that has meant a reorganization of industry and work. Second, the world of neoliberal commodity capitalism brings with it a whole

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<sup>56</sup>Harvey, David 1991. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell

cultural superstructure that has implications for the dynamics of the articulation between the *pasaje* world and dominant culture. The cultural superstructure of late capitalism, as Jameson has pointed out, is characterized by the absence of a great project (save free market capitalism):

If the ideas of a ruling class were once the dominant or hegemonic ideology of bourgeois society, the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm. Faceless masters continue to inflect the economic strategies that constrain our existences, but they no longer need to impose their speech; and the postliteracy of the late capitalist world reflects not only the absence of any great collective project but also the unavailability of the older national language itself.<sup>57</sup>

If popular culture (i.e. the *pasaje*) is formed in a dialectical relationship of struggle and compromise vis a vis dominant culture<sup>58</sup>, the cultural dynamics of late capitalism-- i.e. the absence of a dominant discourse and the lack of the need to impose the dominant speech--has implications for the tenor of the struggle between dominant and subaltern culture: the very dimensions of struggle are transformed. The implications of this can be seen in the fragmented, decentralized struggle over public space that is taking place as a result of the physical spread of capitalism into popular communities and, more generally, the attempt to reorganize the internal spaces of the *pasaje* world. The primary physical representation of this process is the arrival of megamarkets, the malls, and the Home Depots.

Unlike previous phases in the trajectory of capitalist development, in which civil society became more robust and vibrant through the emergence of labor unions and other popular movements,<sup>59</sup> the neoliberal model of capitalist development, which attempts to link citizenship to consumption, has had an apathy inducing quality associated with it.

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<sup>57</sup>Jameson, Frederic 1984. "Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" New Left Review 146

<sup>58</sup>Hall, Stuart 1981. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'" People's History and Socialist Theory Ralph Samuel (ed.) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

<sup>59</sup>Rueschmeyer, Dietrich 1992. Capitalist Development and Democracy University of Chicago Press



Some of these dimensions of neoliberalism's structural impact on social space have been highlighted by Roberts<sup>60</sup> in his study of the dilemmas of democratic deepening. The thrust of his argument is that the social spaces where popular subjects have been historically constituted as actors--the party meeting and the union hall--have withered away, leaving the popular sectors essentially rudderless. What Roberts' study does not explore, however, is the emergence of alternative sites in the wake of the decline of these spaces. New spaces for the constitution of subjects have emerged that are increasingly centered around the privatized, atomized, and commodified spaces of neoliberal capitalist consumption. What impact are these emerging spaces having on popular political culture?

Over the last ten to twenty years, the *pasaje* has been engaged in a titanic--yet fragmentary, low intensity, and ambiguous--embrace with the forces of neoliberal capitalism and commodification that are slowly engulfing it. What is underway here, I believe, is a transformation in the way the world is made sense of and in the way that the *pasaje* is articulated to the dominant culture. A fragmented and dispersed cultural struggle is underway as the *pasaje* has had to learn how to adjust to the presence of the commodified world of late capitalism. This struggle has contradictory dimensions.

Commodity capitalism is enticing because it promises instant gratification and all forms of pleasure. At the same time, however, it brings with it potentially noxious effects that can undermine substantive forms of democracy and citizenship: "Under the spell of commodity culture," writes Buck-Morss citing Benjamin, "the collective consciousness sinks into an ever deeper sleep."<sup>61</sup> In popular communities, however, many people were deeply skeptical of neoliberalism and thus their first impulse was often to reject the penetration of consumer capitalism into the *poblaciones*. The onset of structural adjustment in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought increasing hardship to the *pasaje*. In

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<sup>60</sup>Roberts, Kenneth 1998. *Deepening Democracy? The Modern Left and Social Movements in Chile and Peru* Stanford University Press

<sup>61</sup>Buck-Morss, Susan 1995. "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe" *October* 73 Summer

many communities, unemployment reached as high as 40% in the early 1980s and poverty and hunger soared.<sup>62</sup> On one hand, then, neoliberal capitalism offers consumer goods and access to the credit instruments that are needed to buy these goods. On the other hand, the same forces that bring consumer goods make people more vulnerable to commodifying impact of market forces, which has made many people wary of market forces. Thus, while attracted by the consumer items that come with commodity capitalism, many were also repulsed by some of the deeper implications that came with it as baggage.

During the initial moments of the neoliberal transformation, the *poblaciones* were a place where popular culture remained relatively insulated from the cultural implications of structural adjustment. The *pasaje* remained a disarticulated oasis that was culturally resilient to the structural transformations being implemented by the Chicago Boys. During the latter 1970s and 1980s, most people in the *poblaciones* experienced structural adjustment primarily in the form of unemployment, hunger, and repression. Thus, they experienced neoliberalism primarily as a determined attempt to roll back many of their fundamental and hard won rights of social citizenship (health care, housing, education, welfare services). Throughout much of the dictatorship, the *pasajes* of the *pobla* were an appendage on the margins of a political economy that was being transformed at its very core. Indeed, during the uprisings of the *pasajes* in the 1980s, the *pobladores* proclaimed their *poblaciones* to be “territory free from oppression.” This term carried with it a whole host of meanings, one of which was that the *pobla* was a social and geographical space that rejected neoliberalism and the values in which it was anchored.

The *pasaje* then, remained a retreat, a space where popular culture could find sanctuary from the forces that seemed to be transforming the rest of Chile. Within its labyrinth of small alleyways, dilapidated housing, and cramped spaces, the *pasaje* remained on the margins of these changes. The geographic distance between the *pasaje*

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<sup>62</sup>There is ample documentation of the effects of structural adjustment on popular communities.

and the glittery world of the malls that were being built in wealthy neighborhoods was relatively small--fifteen miles or less--yet the social distance between these two spaces was immense. Thus, instead of being fully integrated into Santiago as one articulated urban space, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that until the latter stages of the dictatorship, peripheral *poblaciones* coexisted with the glass high-rises that were being built on *Avenida Providencia* and *Avenida las Condes* in an uneasy and often tense relationship. The relationship between the *pasaje* and the emerging centers of power was one of coexistence--not integration. The *pasaje* existed incongruously alongside the gleaming high rises that were sprouting up on *Providencia* and *Las Condes*. The transformations wrought by neoliberalism were a catalyst for *pobladores* to turn to strategies that have been a staple of *pasaje* culture: collective action and mobilization to solve problems. Initially, then, structural adjustment reinforced many of the pillars of popular culture by requiring that *pobladores* turn to the tried ways of the *pasaje*--collective action and organization--to shield them from hunger, unemployment, and repression.

In the 1980s, people in the shantytowns and poor communities that surrounded Santiago could only encounter the full dimensions of the neoliberal transformation by taking a bus or the subway to the other side of Santiago, to the wealthy neighborhoods of Las Condes and Vitacura where the malls and the shopping centers and the gleaming glass high-rises were being built, where a "little United States" was slowly taking shape. *Pobladores* could get on the metro (subway) in *Estacion San Pablo* or *Estacion Lo Ovalle*, in the poor sectors of Santiago, and twenty or thirty minutes later get off in *Estacion Los Leones* or *Estacion Tobalaba* in the upscale sector, and literally be in another world--the commodity world of malls, of elegant stores, of consumption.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>The construction of the metro (subway) that connects these two worlds can in itself be seen as a form of physical articulation. Yet, until the mid 1990s this articulation remained artificial because the gap social gap remained immense.

During this period, only the wealthy and upper middle classes could hope to become fully integrated into the world being created by neoliberal capitalism.

The *pobladores*, the workers, and the lower middle classes could only stand and watch as the rich reaped the lions share of the benefits of structural adjustment. Indeed, in the 1980s a common scene that unfolded on the streets of upscale business districts in Santiago was of the *poblador* offering employment services--plumbing, carpentry, etc.--on the sidewalk in front of a Gucci store where women drove up in their late model Mercedes or Peugeot to shop for the latest Italian and French styles. The only real linkage between the *poblador* and the women in the Gucci store was their presence in the same physical space. The world of credit cards and malls remained out of reach for the overwhelming bulk of the *pobladores*.

Since the transition, however, the commodified, McDonaldized world of the neoliberal juggernaut has metastasized from the gleaming high rises of Las Condes and Vitacura into the heart of many popular municipalities, and brought this world much closer to the *poblaciones*. Fueled by a rising standard of living in the *poblaciones* over the last decade, and by the increasing availability of credit, the malls and megamarkets have sprouted up in popular communities in an effort to tap into this sector of the population. Standing on the third floor of a public housing project--the so-called "*cajas de fosforo*"<sup>64</sup> housing built by the government--one can look down and see the corrugated tin roofs of houses on the *pasajes* of the *pobla*, fastened in place by tires and by heavy rocks so that they won't blow away during winter storms. From this perspective it is possible to see that the backs of many houses are still made of fruit crates, two by fours, and cement blocks. Many houses have added makeshift rooms to accommodate the *allegados* who live with them. Off in the distance, a few blocks away, is the familiar, yet out of place, yellowish glow of the golden arches of a McDonald's.

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<sup>64</sup>Cajas de fosforo--matchbox. They are known as matchboxes because they are tiny.

The presence of a megamarket, or a McDonald's in a popular community is more than a mere change in the physical landscape: the golden arches bring with it a whole host of spatial and cultural implications that are articulating with and transforming the *pasajes*. The physical spaces of many popular sector municipalities and *poblaciones* are slowly being transformed by the arrival of shopping centers, supermarkets, and cable television. These transformations in material conditions are bringing with them a sea change in modes of sociability. Indeed, since the transition, the world of the *pobla* and the world of the shopping mall have now come to co-exist within the same social space.

The response to the arrival of the megamarkets and malls has varied. At times, the *pasaje* has waged a form of cultural trench warfare. At other times the *pasaje* has adapted to these changes, developing a synthesis between "homo consumerus" and the *pasaje*. This struggle has been extremely uneven, and its dynamics are extremely complex and even contradictory, but there is little doubt that it is underway as neoliberal capitalism has gradually spread its reach into popular municipalities and communities. There is a dialectic of acceptance and rejection. On the one hand, there is the desire to become part of the consumer culture, while on the other there is the fear of commodification. Thus, while traveling with a community activist on a bus to a meeting across Santiago, as we drove through a middle class area, she pointed to a bank that was building a drive through window, and with pride noted that "see, we have these things here too." Paradoxically, she did not have a car and could not have a checking account because of the income restrictions on having such accounts. Yet despite the fact that the drive through window was of no use to her, it nevertheless symbolized progress.

The spread of megamarkets and malls into lower income municipalities gives visible confirmation to a rhetoric of progress. Whenever a new mall, supermarket, or megamarket is inaugurated in a working class municipality, mayors will make their appearance to cut the ribbon and make declarations concerning how the new structure represents progress for the *comuna*. The presence of a McDonald's or a megamarket is

pictured as tangible evidence of Chile's current status as the "jaguar of Latin America." The space that is created by the presence of the megamarket, then, can be seen as a representation,<sup>65</sup> where everything is arranged to stand for something, to stand for progress and the entrepreneurial spirit. The spaces of modernity--the megamarket, the golden arches, or the blue and red glow of the Domino's Pizza sign, seem to evoke some larger truth. At the same time, however, these spaces are also a site of popular struggle--a struggle over meaning which is anchored in differences over societal order.

One of the instruments that has served as the cement to articulate the *pasajes* with the megamarkets and the malls has been the credit card and government policy. Integration into the consumer market in the post-transition has been driven and facilitated by the massification of credit mechanisms. It is important to keep in mind that credit cards are a relatively new phenomenon in Chile, especially in the *pasajes*. It is only in the last decade that credit cards and other credit instruments have been made available to the masses in Chile, putting the world of consumption at their reach. Working class and lower middle class groups now have access to modern credit mechanisms for the first time. The transition from living life on a cash basis, where if people did not have the money on hand to make a purchase they went without the item, to having credit available, coupled with the influx of all the symbols of modernity (malls, cable TV, cell phones, etc.) have had a major impact.

The statistics on consumer debt tell a revealing story: among the lowest income groups in Chile (those whose incomes were under 120,000 pesos in 1995), there are 1,055,000 families in debt out of a total of 1,523,000 families.<sup>66</sup> Much of this debt is in the form of consumer debt. The rise in consumer debt in the *poblaciones* is also revealed in the development of a thriving new business: repossession companies and legal aides that

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<sup>65</sup>Mitchell, Timothy 1983. *Colonising Egypt* Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>66</sup>Camara de Comercio de Santiago

must go into the *poblaciones* and serve people with notices to force people to pay or to repossess their goods. Problems associated with debt have also become an issue of increasing concern to popular movement organizations. Consumer groups have begun to organize around the debt issue to pressure the government for relief from housing debt and other forms of debt.

Following the transition to democracy in 1990, credit was massified and extended to lower income groups by lowering the restrictions on access to credit, such that only families with incomes below the poverty level were excluded from access to credit.<sup>67</sup> All that was demanded from people is that they show that they have had steady employment for one year, with an income above the poverty level. Although low income families cannot hope to obtain a visa or mastercard, they can get store credit cards with significant lines of credit that enable them to buy televisions, VCRs, refrigerators, microwaves, stereos, etc. The massification of credit following the transition, as Moulian points out, has enabled many lower income working class families to gain an illusory access to modernity:<sup>68</sup>

More than any discourse, the possibility of going from a black and white TV to a color TV, of buying videocassettes, of buying microwave ovens, of getting cable television, operates as a decisive factor in the construction of subjectivity and in relations with society. The "friendliness" of consumer relations counteracts the harshness of labor relations.<sup>69</sup>

While credit does not provide an avenue to social mobility, it can become a badge of good citizenship.<sup>70</sup> Having a credit card has become a symbol of habilitation and membership in a community of citizens. Credit entitles a person to citizenship in the marketplace. Credit limits and other mechanisms form a species of hierarchy of citizenship where those who have the most capital have more citizenship. The extension of credit to the credit worthy

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<sup>67</sup>Moulian, Tomas 1997. *Chile Actual Anatomía de un Mito* Santiago: LOM Ediciones

<sup>68</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>*ibid.* p.99

<sup>70</sup>*ibid.* p.105

also creates another social cleavage between those who are worthy and those who are not worthy. In the *pasaje*, there is a cleavage that is emerging between those who have managed to climb out of poverty and into the ranks of an emerging lower middle class and those who remain poor. This can be seen in the sharp differences in the quality of housing on the *pasajes* of the *poblaciones*. Associational life, moreover, cannot compete with credit mechanisms in terms of its ability to provide access to the consumer market. Indeed, "the capitalist economy itself has corrosive effects on community, solidarity, and family that scarcely can be mitigated by volunteerism or moral exhortation."<sup>71</sup> In a scenario where the market sphere (which privileges individual action) is enlarged, association that rest on volunteerism become less relevant as a form of citizenship.

Credit cards can also be seen as representing a powerful form of disciplinary power. First, because they are given out on an individual basis and because each individual is responsible for his own creditworthiness, credit cards act as an agent of atomization and individualization. Second, the process of learning how to use credit cards and how to regulate one's own behavior in the capitalist marketplace constitutes a powerful form of discipline, and one more technique of power as the capacity to produce good citizens. Consider the following statement made by the director of community development in the municipality of Pudahuel:

When credit cards were first made available to people in Pudahuel, we had alot of problems. People got into tremendous debt problems...they couldn't pay their bills. Some stopped paying water and electricity bills so that they could keep their TV or refrigerator. At the municipality we had to help some of them get their utilities turned on. But, now they have learned how to use credit cards, and they don't get into as much problems...they have learned that they have to pay their bills every month, and that they have to budget their money.

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<sup>71</sup>Cohen, Jean 1999. "Trust, Voluntary Association, and Workable Democracy: The Contemporary American Discourse on Civil Society" *Democracy and Trust* Mark Warren (ed.) Cambridge University Press p.229



In short, they have learned the rules of the game for the credit card citizen. This power is a form of power that is generally unavailable to the state, but it buttresses the state's efforts to produce citizens that are compatible with the capitalist economy. Thus, when I asked one person in Villa Wolf why he had opted to forgo payment on his home so that he could pay his bill from "*La Polar*" (an electronics megastore), he answered that "the state forgives, but *La Polar*...they will come here and take your things right out of your house...and they will also put your name in DICOM." It was the certainty that he would face swift consequences for his actions from *La Polar* that propelled him to pay his bill.

The massification of credit mechanisms for lower income people that has facilitated access to the consumer market of an entire swath of the Chilean population has altered the very basic rhythms of life in the *pasajes*. It has been one of the catalysts for a turning inward that is reflected in the fact that people now spend much of their free time in front of the television, or going to the malls that have begun to spring up in popular sectors of Santiago. The mall is the epitome of the consumer ethos. Even people that do not have the power to consume go to the malls. Those who cannot consume engage in a kind of "phantasmic consumption"<sup>72</sup> where people escape poverty and the drab block apartments in which they live, to fantasize about consuming and become entranced by the commodities in the window.

The dynamics of the struggle between the *pasaje* and neoliberalism (resistance and adaptation) in popular communities can be seen in the reorganization of public spaces that has been wrought by the arrival of transnational capital. The planned construction of a new Carrefour<sup>73</sup> "megamarket" in the heart of the popular sector municipality of Maipu initially provoked strong protests from local shopkeepers because the megamarket would literally displace all of the little *negocios* (shops) that was the source of livelihood for

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<sup>72</sup>Benjamin, Walter 1999. *The Arcades Project* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

<sup>73</sup>Carrefour is a French megamarket (much like an American Wal-Mart).

many *pobladores*. The small shopkeepers correctly argued that the megamarket would put most of them out of business. Thus, a struggle over defining how public space would be used unfolded.

Over the years, an entire economic and social ecology had developed around the small stalls of these small scale enterprises where people sold all types of goods, ranging from food to books to bootleg tapes and CDs. Aside from the material benefits afforded to those who sold their items in these small kiosks, *negocios*, and stands, however, there was also a cultural component associated with this method of commerce. Commerce, in short, created its own form “*negocio*” sociability. Indeed, it could be argued that the *negocio*, the kiosk, and the street corner constitute important spaces for sociability and for association in the periphery of the metropolis of Santiago.

In the end, however, these late 20th century Luddites inevitably lost their battle to the forces of “modernity,” and were forced to prostrate themselves at the altar of the seemingly inexorable march of globalized capital. By the time that the megamarket opened its doors a year and a half later, former *negocio* owners had been turned into low level employees wearing the yellow/green smock that is characteristic of Carrefour employees. They would greet customers at the door--“*Buenos dias, bienvenidos a Carrefour*”--as they walked into the clean, air conditioned space of the megamarket and the sterile antiseptic glitter of an endless sea of neatly arranged commodities, ranging from food to furniture. They could be seen stocking the shelves with new products and tending to the cash registers. Their smocks can be seen as a metaphor for the arrival of a flexible accumulation in the *poblaciones*--which brings with the disciplinary regime of neoliberal capitalism.

The state had also been important in fueling this transformation--many of the employees (cashiers, stockpersons, etc.) in Carrefour had participated in courses offered by NGOs with funding from FOSIS to teach them how to be cashiers, stockpeople, etc., so that they could get a job in the store. This has been an important thrust of the state’s

social policy to foment participation and promote development: prepare people to enter the market and fill the low wage jobs that the service oriented labor market now offers: cashiers, restaurant workers, stockpersons, etc. These partnerships between NGOs and the state to do the bidding of transnational capital reveal the underlying essence of post-transition democracy: with minor exceptions, the state has acted much like Marx envisioned: as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie.

Typically, these jobs pay between 175 and 250 dollars a month. The state contracts this task out to NGOs who enter the *poblaciones* offering courses to teach people the labor skills for such positions. NGOs that specialize in "*capacitation laboral*" (labor training) send representatives into the *poblaciones* to meet with the leaders of neighborhood councils, who provide their neighborhood council community center as a space where a group of young people can be trained for positions as cashiers, stockpeople, and--if they are attractive enough--as product demonstrators who stand in the aisles of supermarkets giving out samples of food and other products.<sup>74</sup> The council will advertise the course that is being offered and urge young people who are unemployed to come in and seek training.

The transformation wrought by the arrival of the megamarket, however, has been uneven and shot through with tensions and contradictions that manifest themselves at the very entrance of the Carrefour: a low intensity struggle for control over public space has continued on a daily basis just outside the doors of the megamarket. This struggle for control over public space expresses a variety of antagonisms that lie beneath a facade that is festooned with commodities.

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<sup>74</sup>These women are dressed up in short skirts to show products in the aisles of supermarkets in upper class neighborhoods. One former council leader that I interviewed had established his own small business obtaining employment for women in supermarkets. He showed me a portfolio filled with pictures of women from the poblacion in thong bathing suits that he would take to managers of supermarkets in Las Condes and Vitacura so that they could choose whom to interview and hire.

An examination of the physical space surrounding the Carrefour suggests that the *pasaje* has found a way to adapt to the presence of the intruder by waging a form of surreptitious trench warfare. The electronic sliding glass doors that are the entrance to the Carrefour stand as a kind of a kind of permeable membrane that both separates and articulates the commodified world of postmodern, neoliberal capitalism and the world of the *pasaje*. This space, at the entrance to the Carrefour, can tell us much about how *pasaje* culture and the culture associated with consumer capitalism are articulated. Indeed, a powerful metaphor for the uneven character of the penetration of the forces of globalized capital is provided by the scenes that unfold just outside the environmentally controlled comfort of the Carrefour. Two radically different social spaces stand side by side at the entrance to the Carrefour.

The doors that separate the inside of the Carrefour from its surroundings separates, yet articulates, two different spaces that contain different social realities. Just outside the sliding glass doors, a couple of mangy, flea ridden dogs copulate, while several other dogs--who perhaps lost the battle for the lone bitch in heat--wander around scavenging for food while they await their turn (when would one see this outside a Wal-Mart in the US? People would be horrified by such a site.). The presence of the dog is ubiquitous on the *pasajes* of the *poblacion*. The mutt is one of the hallmarks of popular space. It is featured prominently in many popular narratives of the *poblacion*. The dog, moreover, has a function: I was told by a *poblador* in *La Pincoya* that in the harsh winters of the early 1980s, people slept with the dogs because they provided warmth on cold, damp nights when people could not afford to buy heating oil.

Several dozen unemployed men and women, oblivious to the dogs, have haphazardly spread blankets outside the store to sell things on the informal economy, while their lookout--their frog (*sapo*) as they call him--keeps a wary eye out for the *carabineros* (police) who patrol commercial areas to remove illegal sellers. The blankets are rigged with wires or strings so that on a moment's notice, they can pick up their wares

and scatter like a herd of gazelles fleeing from a tiger. A disheveled blind beggar stands at the entrance, shaking a cup with a few coins in it. A young man, on his way to catch a bus, stops and leans up against the wall of the Carrefour and urinates. The area where he urinates seems to have become a kind of informal public toilet for men--indeed, the wall reeks of urine.<sup>75</sup> Every so often, a "*mono relojero*" (literally "monkey timekeeper"), who makes his living keeping time for the passing buses (his "salary" consists of fifty peso<sup>76</sup> tips from the bus driver), can take a break and rest inside the air conditioned comfort of the megamarket. He informs the passing buses about time intervals between the last bus and his bus, so that the driver can plan his route to take on as many passengers as possible (drivers are paid according to the number of bus tickets that they sell). The bus drivers pay the "*mono*" for this service because it nets them a significant increase in their monthly salary. The bus drivers, in turn, keep the *mono* informed about police movements in a several block radius, and the *mono* tells the *sapo* when the police might be closing in on the informal vendors outside the megamarket. Ultimately, then, all of these people are feeding off the space of the megamarket. A complex social ecosystem, then, has been constructed by the presence of these marginalized fragments around the megamarket.

A family that makes its living from a small kiosk that sells candies and soft drinks sits outside, taking in the summer day, talking to the people who are selling things. The kiosk is a place where the informal vendors buy a candy or a soft drink and talk. All of these people just outside the doors of the Carrefour know each other, and over time have developed into an informal network of cooperation that extends from the bus drivers to the *mono* to the *sapo* and to the informal sellers. These people cooperate to resist the state's efforts to enforce the laws that favor the Carrefour and other "real businesses." Informal vendors are seen by the Carrefour as unfair competition because they can sell

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<sup>75</sup> This is another of the many symbols of the fact that despite the attempt to become a society where like the US every public activity is closely regulated, the state still lacks the capacity to enforce such discipline.

<sup>76</sup> fifty pesos was approximately US \$0.10

their products cheaper than the Carrefour. Thus, while the state and the municipality attempt to watch them, they have learned to develop complex systems and networks to watch back and keep an eye on the state. When the police get within a block of the Carrefour, the *sapo* will whistle loudly, the signal for everyone to leave. By the time the police arrive, everyone is gone. Once the *carabineros* leave, the vendors slowly find their way back, and like the corals in a reef, they grow back and latch onto the space surrounding the megamarket.

Just outside the doors of the order and rationality of the “modernity” that is captured by the neatly arranged aisles inside the Carrefour, then, are the scenes of what neoliberal economists and planners--imbued with what Habermas once referred to as “technocratic consciousness”<sup>77</sup>--see as disorder and the antithesis to modernity that was so despised by Pinochet and the Chicago Boys as the epitome of backwardness and of Third worldliness. “Disorder” has emerged to find a niche and reproduce itself within the very womb of neoliberal capitalist space, to find an at times uneasy synthesis with the intruder. All of these people, bearers of popular identity and customs, have adapted to the impact of the Carrefour’s presence. Indeed, they have turned the presence of the megamarket to their advantage. The informal vendors have benefited because they use the space of the megamarket to increase their sales. They have become something of an informal subsidiary to the megamarket. Even the beggar has gained something--as he told me, he gets more money here than other places.

The dynamic unfolding at the electronic glass membrane that separates the commodified, antiseptic world of the megamarket and its accompanying cultural/ideological superstructure from the world of the *pasaje*, then, is one of low intensity resistance within a broader mode of compliance: on one hand, selling things outside the doors of the Carrefour is an act of defiant resistance that seeks to challenge the

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<sup>77</sup>Habermas, Jurgen 1970. Towards A Rational Society. London: Heinemann

way in which public space is used. This act encompasses a whole politics of rights and customs that is ultimately anchored to understandings of private and public. At the same time, however, this form of resistance complies with a broader *habitus* within which the parameters of hegemony are established. That is, it is resistance that--despite the efforts of the police--is still tacitly tolerated.

It would seem, then, that the *pasaje* has adapted to the alien intruder in its midst and made an uneasy peace with the megamarket. The *pasaje* has even come to develop a symbiotic relationship to the behemoth that overwhelmed the neighborhood, as the informal market that has mushroomed up just outside the Carrefour benefits and feeds off of the customers from that it attracts. Customers leaving the store will spot something on one of the blankets and buy it before they catch the bus back to their "*pobla.*" Even the dogs benefit, as store employees toss them some unwanted food, and long ago stopped throwing them out when they walked into the megamarket to rest on its cool marbled floor. In short, an odd sort of moral economy has developed where the managers of the Carrefour give sanctuary to the presence of the "rabble" just outside their door because they do not really hamper the day to day functioning of the megamarket. In this moral economy, even the Carrefour must be sensitive to popular custom.

The arrival of the megamarket, however, is having broader repercussions on the *pasajes* of the *pobla*. Increasingly, people are going to supermarkets and megamarkets to do their shopping, and some of the *negocios* in nearby *poblaciones* are beginning to suffer. Municipal governments in working class/poor districts are also beginning to pass more regulations and restrictions over the maze of small businesses in the *pasajes* in an effort to regulate and organize the use of space inside the *poblacion*. For the most part, these regulations have been widely ignored because most low income municipalities still lack the enforcement capacity to translate such regulations into reality. Too, municipal governments realize that an attempt to enforce these laws could produce a backlash. The attempt to regulate, spatialize, and rationalize the *pasaje*, however, is another visible

symbol of the effort to reimagine the *pasaje* from above and mold it in the image of an American working class suburb. Indeed, the lack of control over the *negocios*, over street vendors, and more generally, over public space, is seen by planners as another hallmark of the “underdevelopment” that, like the urine in the informal toilet behind the Carrefour, to economists and technocrats reeks of the noxious characteristics of the *pasaje*.

Indicators of the megamarket’s magnetlike power of attraction in the *pasajes* is a thriving new business that has developed in the *poblacion*, which reflects these changing habits: the emergence of the “*colectivo*”—a form of transportation that is a hybrid between a taxi and a bus whose sole purpose is to take people from the *pasajes* to the megamarket and back. For a fee of 200 pesos (US\$ 0.35) a *colectivo* will take you from the *pobla* to the megamarket, which is about five to ten minutes away. A whole fleet of *colectivos* is parked around the Carrefour, waiting to fill up and take customers and their merchandise back to the *pasajes* from where they came. The *colectivo* drivers talk to the *mono relojero* and the *kiosk* owner while they wait for customers to fill the car. In the *poblacion*, there is a specific intersection of two *pasajes* where the *colectivos* wait for customers to go to the megamarket.

The arrival of the megamarket, however, has consequences for sociability. Inside the megamarket, no one knows anyone else. In walking around the aisles of the Carrefour, one sees atomized individuals walking up and down the aisles with their eyes fixed on the dazzling array of products. The struggles that are taking place just outside the electronic membranes that enclose the Carrefour seem to gently fade into the background. Each customer becomes an atomized island, weaving his or her way through the aisles of products, gazing at an endless maze of commodities, while soothing music softly plays their anesthetizing hymns in the background, drowning out the noises of the struggles unfolding outside. In the aisles of the megamarket and the controlled spaces of the mall, social conflicts seem to recede into the background. The struggles over public space taking place outside, and the deeper contradictions that these conflicts encompass, get lost



in the rows of neatly arranged products. Indeed, much like Benjamin's exhibitions, the megamarket and the malls seem to "deny the existence of class antagonisms."<sup>78</sup> When they cross the sliding glass membrane, everyone becomes a consumer. In the Carrefour, then, the sociability that accompanied commerce is lost as people become mere consumers whose gaze is focused on the antiseptic rows of products. At the check-out counter, people represent merely another data point in the cash register--not *vecinos*. For the cashier, each person is merely another transaction. By contrast in the *negocio*, consumption takes place in the context of dense social web of *pasaje* relations. The megamarkets and the malls are the emerging battleground for the heart and soul of the *pasaje*: in neoliberal capitalism it is not so much the alienated worker, but the fetishising consumer that must take centerstage in any analysis.

The tensions and contradictions of the arrival of the megamarket world manifest themselves in the wall art that adorn the *pasajes* of the *pobla*. Evidence of a cultural struggle between the *pasaje* world and the consumerist ethos of postmodernity can be seen on these murals. Two adjacent wall murals neatly capture the tensions on a *pasaje* in La Pincoya: one wall, adopting a Gramscian motif, defiantly proclaims La Pincoya to be a "trench in the popular struggle" (*La Pincoya-- Trinchera de la Lucha Popular!f*), and pays homage to the struggle of the *pobladores* for a home, for dignity, and for rights. Beneath these words is a painting of a man in a straw hat (a typical Chilean *campesino*) handing a shovel to a woman. Emblazoned in the background is the Chilean flag. Across the narrow *pasaje*, as if staring defiantly back, is the language of the post-transition generation: graffiti depicts the logo of the local gang (*pandilla*), along with the rap lyrics from a US rap band.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Buck-Morss 1991, op. cit. p.86

<sup>79</sup>I don't know precisely which rap band it was.

Read as a whole, these two walls frame the *pasaje* and capture the tensions and antinomies of the post-transition era: on one hand there is a nostalgia for an idyllic remembered past when *pobladores* cooperated with each other to build toward a utopian collective community. Expressed in this mural is the remembered community of collective struggle and cooperation to build the utopia that was promised by the progressive meta-narratives of the 1960s and early 70s. This utopian vision still echoes through the *pasajes* of the *pobla* like a ghost that haunts a house. The adjacent wall, with its rap logos and lyrics, is an expression of the rage and anger of the fragmented younger generation of *pobladores*--the *pandilleros* (gangbangers) that are becoming increasingly prevalent on the *pasajes*.

Both of these murals, then, express a rejection of the megamarket world, but from radically different perspectives. One wall celebrates--and nostalgically laments--the passing of a past popular culture that emerged in the context of a Marxist, populist, Catholic meta-narrative. These meta-narratives viscerally reject the individualistic, consumerist ethos of neoliberal capitalism. The adjacent mural expresses the anger of those who grew up in the late capitalist era and in the absence of a counterhegemonic narrative. It is articulated in the language of the lumpen.

It would seem, then that the *pasaje* world is engaged in a titanic--yet fragmented, incoherent, and dispersed--struggle to find some sort of an accommodation, or at least some sort of workable detente with the neoliberal juggernaut that is bearing down on it. At times it would seem that popular culture is slowly and grudgingly finding itself having to cede ground to a force that demands, ultimately, the unconditional surrender of everything in its path. At other times, it seems to have reached an uneasy, shifting accommodation, and at other times it would seem to have absorbed the consumer ethos and adapted it to popular culture.

One of the hallmarks of the changes taking place in popular communities has been a declining emphasis on collective action and an increasing emphasis on personal

autonomy and individual consumption that is captured in a broad based retreat into the private sphere of consumption and the home. The changing relationship between the individual, the home, and the community constitutes a third primal scene: the declining porosity of the community that is a product of the increasing commodification of the home, the establishment of clearer boundaries between the public and the private, and the expansion of the private sphere coupled with the shrinking of the public sphere. People, as Eugenio Tironi--a sociologist close to the *concertacion*--points out

do not belong to a political party or a social movement. Instead, in the best of cases, they belong to a group oriented toward protecting the immediate environment. More than a citizen, he/she is an individual, a consumer in the market, and at best, a neighbor...The masses that used to fill the assembly halls or public manifestations have been displaced to the labyrinths of the Home Depot in search of items to improve their homes.<sup>80</sup>

The primary nexus of social integration, in short, is the market, where people do not interact so much as they gaze and those that are able to do so consume. Tironi's comments highlight a problem that has an impact on the prospects of democratization: the impact of the neoliberal market and consumerist ethos on political culture and the public sphere, and the concomitant impact on democratic institutions that this has had--particularly the institutions that are the harbingers of substantive democracy. The consumerist ethos has acted on public space and associational life like agent orange acted on forests--it has decimated and transformed public space.

More generally, this mass displacement of people from traditional public spaces, such as the assembly halls, party meetings, and the street (the street has been an important factor in the development of challenges to established authority) to the commodified spaces of the malls and the Home depot has had a significant impact on the density and richness of associational life, and on the public sphere, that in many ways parallels

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<sup>80</sup>Tironi, Eugenio 1999. *La Irrupcion de las Masas y el Malestar de las Elites* Santiago: Grijalbo p.42

Habermas<sup>81</sup> analysis of the decline of the bourgeois public sphere. The commodified space of the mall and the Home Depot imply a different subjectivity--the consumer citizen--than does the assembly hall or community center. The megamarkets and the malls are a space that serves as a stealthy incubator for nurturing a form of technocratic consciousness that Habermas argued changes the very structures of human interest.<sup>82</sup> These commodified spaces are beginning to slowly displace the *negocio* mode of commerce, and the street sociability that goes with it, which is changing patterns of sociability.

The following brief conversation that took place between two members of the leadership committee of a mother's center in Huechuraba highlights the impact that the forces of consumer capitalism--in this case, the arrival of cable TV--are having on associational life:

*Dolores:* "Dona Irma, why didn't you come to the meeting, we missed you?"

*Irma:* "I *had to stay home and watch the cable*, they were showing the last episode of *Romane*.<sup>83</sup>

*Dolores:* Yes, since VTR<sup>84</sup> arrived here, people don't like to come to meetings... If this goes on, we'll just have to cancel our meetings...

*Irma:* Or bring a TV to the *sede*...

Notice first the use of the term "had to stay at home" in reference to staying home to watch the show--as if some irresistible force were attracting Irma to the television set.

The conversation, however, highlights a pervasive feature of post-transition Chile: people have begun to turn their gaze inward and away from public activities. Indeed, only six people showed up at the meeting the night before. The comments made by those who did attend was that everyone was home watching *Romane*. It is in the shrinking and

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<sup>81</sup>Habermas, 1991 op. cit.

<sup>82</sup>Habermas, 1970 op.cit.

<sup>83</sup>*Romane* is a Chilean soap opera that became wildly popular in the fall and winter of 2000.

<sup>84</sup>VTR is a Chilean cable television company that has been bringing cable TV to the *poblaciones*.

atomization of those spaces that traditionally housed subaltern counterpublics--such as neighborhood councils, women's centers, development committees, etc.--that we can see most clearly the impact of neoliberal capitalist development on popular civil society. The time and energy that people used to spend in public sphere activities (manifestations, party meetings, political discussions, etc.) are becoming concentrated around private spaces (the mall, the *Carrefour* megamarket, and the home) and private activities (consumption).

A metaphor for the atrophy of spaces that housed a subaltern counterpublic is provided by a viniet from a popular Chilean movie "*El Chacotero Sentimental*." In one of the viniets, a working class couple living in a typical overcrowded public housing project is having trouble finding a private space for lovemaking. The drab, cramped block apartment housing in which they live as "*allegados*" is too overcrowded, making romance virtually impossible. The men of the *pobla* got together through their soccer club and discovered through conversations that they were all having the same problem: either they could not find a space to be alone with their partners, or there was no privacy because of the paper thin walls of the apartments, which inhibited lovemaking. The first instinct of the men of the soccer club was to go to the government to demand a solution to their problem. They returned in ignominious defeat (in itself a metaphor--government can't solve your problems).

They then attempted to solve their problem by using the neighborhood council center, a physical space in the *poblacion* that in the past has been a nodal point in the development of a subaltern counterpublic, as a private space for lovemaking. Thus, what in the past had been a key space for housing a public sphere was now a space for engaging in the most private and personal of activities: sex. No longer was the center being used for public minded political debates, or to articulate political demands and organize protests, it was used for sexual activity. Yet at the same time, paradoxically, the

utilization of the center for sexual activity, demonstrates the presence of a Putnamesque/neo-Tocquevillian<sup>85</sup> form of social capital: the soccer club worked together to cooperate to solve a dilemma facing the community--the dilemma of providing a private space for lovemaking. Thus, while social capital may be present, it is present in the context of the atrophy of a vibrant public sphere. Indeed, the use of the *junta de vecinos* for such purposes is symbolic of the privatization of public space. There is an element of reality in this viniet. Increasingly, neighborhood councils are being used as entertainment centers: some are equipped with a television, a stereo, a ping-pong table, and other items for entertainment.

Nowhere is the retreat into the private sphere reflected more than in the increasing emphasis on the home. "Modernity", writes Moulian, "allows us to consume without the danger of feeling guilty."<sup>86</sup> The growing absence of the guilt that was in the past associated with excessive consumption is captured in the comments of a resident of a *poblacion* that is comparatively more affluent than others. We were standing in front of his house talking, and across the narrow alleyway, a man and a young boy were taking advantage of a warm late winter day to add Spanish tile to their "driveway."<sup>87</sup> The man with whom I was talking pointed to the two people working across the *pasaje*, and observed that when the *poblacion* was created, people worked collectively to build and improve their homes: they created committees to pressure the state and get building materials (*comites de adelanto*), they organized construction committees and worked on homes jointly, and neighbors helped each other.

Now, he said, everyone goes to the "Home Center" to buy the materials they need for home improvement (often on credit)--there is no need for a committee anymore.

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<sup>85</sup>Putnam, 1993 op. cit.

<sup>86</sup>Moulian, Tomas 1998. *El Consumo Me Consume* Santiago: LOM Ediciones

<sup>87</sup>I put driveway in quotes because they did not own a car. Driveway is perhaps an awkward term: I am referring to a space that is barely able to accommodate a compact car with inches to spare on all sides.

Every month they will buy a small portion of the items needed, until in a year or so the home improvement project is complete. Too, whereas before the neoliberal revolution, there were pressures to conform and to not be ostentatious, now those pressures have all but vanished. It is now acceptable--even though there might be envy--to buy materials and beautify one's home, even if it far surpasses anyone else's home. This impetus to improve personal living space has generated a competitive dynamic among the residents of La Pincoya, many of whom seem to be engaged in a race to have the prettiest facade in front of their homes. Curiously, the back of the home, that is invisible to the public, often remains dilapidated. It is the front of the home that is improved and modified, to make the home look as much as possible like a middle class home.

The informal competition to have the nicest home (and to fill the home with as many consumer goods as possible) sheds light on the changing balance between public and private and suggests that a commodified concept of the home--a bourgeoisie consumerist understanding of home--is beginning to invade previous popular understandings of home in some *poblaciones*. What one scholar called the "bourgeois utopia"<sup>88</sup> of suburbia--a cultural creation that in Chile has arrived as a part of the discursive package that accompanies the Home Depot--is beginning to penetrate popular culture. Home has become a fantasy. Everyone wants to do home improvement--add a second floor, tile the front, put in a new door, add on to the back of the house, etc.

The almost obsessive search for products to improve the home has become an important social activity in the latter 1990s. Home Centers and Home Depots have mushroomed up in popular sector municipalities and have become among the most popular places to go. One goes to the Home Depot or the Home Center on the weekends and sees throngs of people looking for things to beautify the private space of home. The Home Depot is a contemporary version of Benjamin's arcades: a temple of commodity

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<sup>88</sup>Fishman, Robert 1980. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* New York

capitalism, dedicated solely to the commodification and McDonaldization of home.<sup>89</sup> The popularity of the Home Depot and the Home Center points to an increasing focus on the private space of home. The increasing emphasis on home--and on home as a commodity and status--suggests changes at the level of identity. The emphasis on the interior of the home is reflective of the growing penetration of the bourgeois understanding of the relationship between private and public. House and home, as one scholar has argued, “occupy central places in consumer consciousness as the core of a...*specific commodity-based identity*.”<sup>90</sup>

A more clearly delineated and rigid barrier between the interior of the home (the private) and the street (the public) is also being created. In the establishment of more clearly defined boundaries between the home and the street, we are seeing a shift in the balance between the private and the communal.<sup>91</sup> Benjamin argued that the bourgeois home in Northern Europe was a sanctuary from the public and the site of private fantasy. By contrast, homes in cities where capitalism was less fully developed were “less the refuge to which people retreat than the inexhaustible reservoir from which they flood out.”<sup>92</sup> In these less capitalistic settings, the communal is intimately intertwined with the home: “Just as the living room reappears on the street, so the street migrates into the living room.”<sup>93</sup> The boundary between the public and the private is blurred. The drive to build sturdier barriers between the home and the street is reflective of the privatization of the space of the home as much as it is a reflection of safety concerns.

It is also reflective of an evolving understanding of the notion of private property. Indeed, one of the central themes of structural adjustment has been to instill respect for private property. One of the hallmarks of the *pasaje* according to the dominant narrative,

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<sup>89</sup> Benjamin, 1999 op.cit.

<sup>90</sup> Young, 1997 op. cit. p.142

<sup>91</sup> Gillioch, Graeme 1994. *Myth and Metropolis Walter Benjamin and the City* Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.* p.27

<sup>93</sup> Benjamin, cited in Buck-Morss, op. cit. 1991 p.26



has been a lack of respect for private property and a willingness to violate laws concerning the use of public and private space. As evidence, they point to land occupations, squatter settlements, and the use of public spaces for commercial activities.

These changes are having ripple effects on associational life. Commodified understandings of home are also underwriting important changes in the balance between public and private in people's lives. As one scholar has argued: "The commodified concept of home ties identity to a withdrawal from the public world and to the amount and status of one's belongings."<sup>94</sup> A form of "civic privatism" is gradually becoming more prevalent in some of the more established *poblaciones*. It penetrates the *poblaciones* by articulating to the conservative tendency that is latently present in the social spaces of the *pobla*. Civic privatism enlarges private space and shrinks public space: "The consumer-driven desire of civic privatism tends to produce political quietism because people invest their commitment into their private life, which needs even greater income to fuel it."<sup>95</sup> In this conceptualization, the street is increasingly seen as a space where delinquents and malcontents--drug dealers, glue sniffers, and petty thieves--hang out. Standing on a street corner and talking is read as idleness and indolence.

A powerful force that is driving people off the *pasajes* and into the home has been the arrival of cable television. One recent example is the satellite dishes that have sprung up on top of houses in the *poblaciones* so that men can get the latest arrival: the playboy channel. In late 1999, the playboy channel was made available in Chile through a satellite television company. Buses were plastered with ads featuring an alluring blonde model inside the outlines of a keyhole asking people if they were aware of what their neighbors were watching. Within weeks, the company was overwhelmed with calls for satellite dishes.

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<sup>94</sup>Young, 1997 op.cit. p. 141

<sup>95</sup>Young, 1997 op.cit. p.143

As I walked through the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba and other municipalities on my way to a meeting or to an interview, I noticed that satellite dishes were mushrooming up virtually overnight. They rose above dilapidated houses where people live in overcrowded conditions, and they were anchored to the corners of public housing apartment blocks, wires and cables extending in every direction. Since it is prohibitively expensive to acquire satellite and cable television services, residents have resorted to the collective ethos of popular culture to solve the problem: they pool their resources and bring one dish or one hook up to the block. Then they drill holes through the paper thin walls of the houses and run cables to every house or apartment on the block and share the monthly bill. Many of the people who install the cables also live in these communities, so they “fix” their friends up with service. The influx of cable and satellite television has changed patterns of sociability in popular communities: instead of gathering on a street corner, or going to the *negocio* to talk, or going to play soccer, people now spend more of their free time inside their homes, watching television, consuming American culture.

The influx of the satellite dishes are but one symbolic example of the penetration of the consumerist ethos of modernity into the *poblaciones*. All of this has had a sharp impact on participation in collective activities and interest in public affairs. The massification of credit and the integration of the *poblaciones* into the consumer market has been paralleled by an overall decline in interest in participation in associational and public life.

In Chile, the number of people who are opting to not participate in grassroots organizations has grown since 1992. Grassroots organizations have gradually lost participants, particularly young people. The majority of community leaders that I interviewed, as pointed out, had seen a significant decline in participation in their organizations. As the following table shows, this decline in interest in participation has accelerated at the end of the 1990s:

Table 7-1

Non-Participation in Organizations 1990-1999<sup>96</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>No Participation</u>
1990	54.9%
1992	55.9%
1995	56.5%
1996	55.3%
1999	66.5%

The general trend in Chile, suggested by data, is for non-participation to be generally increasing. This trend is especially evident in the latter half of the 1990s. While non-participation rates remained more or less steady until the mid 1990s, they began to rise substantially toward the end of the decade. In the second half of the 1990s, the number of people claiming that they did not participate in any type of organizations increased by 20.3%. However, the impact has been broader than a mere decline in interest in participation. The relationship between consumption and citizenship has altered the nature of politics. As Moulian explains:

Consumption based citizenship and credit card citizenship are forms of depoliticization of the citizen, because people now no longer conceive of politics as a possibility for deliberation or critical interrogation.<sup>97</sup>

He goes on to ask a very important question: of what use in this scenario is politics and participation? While it is clearly an exaggeration to suggest that participation in politics has been obviated, it is clearly true that there has been a dramatic decline in interest in politics over the last decade in Chile. This shift is reflected in surveys that show a declining interest in politics.

As the following table suggests, the number of people expressing an interest in political issues and in political questions has declined sharply over the last decade (i.e since the transition to democracy).

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<sup>96</sup>Programa de las Naciones Unidas Para el Desarrollo Desarrollo Humano en Chile 2000 Santiago: 2000 p. 139

<sup>97</sup>Moulian, op. cit. 1997 p.104

Table 7-2

Year	Interest in Politics <sup>98</sup>	
	Very Interested	No Interest
1990	39%	24%
1993	27%	29%
1996	21%	37%
1999	17%	32%

Among low income groups, interest in politics and political issues has declined even more dramatically. In short, the impact of neoliberal capitalism has been to expand the private sphere and shrink the public sphere. The structural changes induced by neoliberal structural adjustment have taken their toll. But it is not only that economic changes have altered structures, they have also had an important impact on culture that has worked to transform the nature of politics and participation.

### Conclusion

The spread of neoliberal capitalism is reshaping public space in the *poblaciones*. The narrow *pasajes* of the *poblacion* are giving way--spatially and culturally--to the rationalized, atomized, and individualized spaces of the megamarket, the mall, and the home depot. This process is characterized by the dynamic tensions of resistance, adaptation, and synthesis. Nevertheless, neoliberalism is--albeit slowly and unevenly--transforming and remaking the popular culture that developed in the *pasajes* of the *poblaciones*. This transformation is captured in the changing relationship between private and public, and in the turn toward the private world of the increasingly commodified internal spaces of home. The increasing proximity and accessibility of the consumer market, the malls, the Home Depots, and the megamarkets provide new spaces for the constitution of subjects and bring with them a profound change in consciousness. Popular culture, it seems, is beginning a decent into a state of prolonged sleep as it immerses itself in the fantasy world of the Carrefour and the Home Depot.

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<sup>98</sup>Encuesta Nacional CERC 2000

CHAPTER 8  
PARTICIPATION, PANOPTICISM, AND RESISTANCE : “*LA MUNI*”<sup>1</sup> AND THE  
ANTINOMIES OF DECENTRALIZATION

**Introduction: Neo-Tocquevillian Readings of Decentralization**

Students of democracy and democratization have argued that decentralization is an important element of democratic consolidation and development.<sup>2</sup> Decentralization has been strongly encouraged and supported by international lending agencies and organizations in countries that are part of the “third wave” of democratization. Much of the literature that deals with the question of the impact of decentralization on the quality of democracy has argued that it has a democratizing effect, particularly in the area of state-society relations.<sup>3</sup>

One school of thought has argued that decentralization and the democratization of local governments has a democratizing impact on national governance for several reasons. Most important among them: (1) first, it is argued that decentralization helps to develop democratic values and skills among citizens. Thus, decentralization helps to foster the development of a “civic culture.” (2) Decentralization is also seen as providing additional channels of formal access to government for marginalized sectors of society. By virtue of their smaller size, the potential for the creation of community is greater. Indeed, over three decades ago, Dahl argued that smaller municipalities tend have more socially and civically involved citizens.<sup>4</sup> (3) It is also seen as increasing accountability to local interests

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<sup>1</sup>La Muni is a term used to refer to the municipality in popular communities.

<sup>2</sup>Grindle, Merilee 2000 *Audacious Reforms Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press Diamond, Larry 1999. *Developing Democracy Toward Consolidation* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

<sup>3</sup>Grindle, 2000 op.cit.

<sup>4</sup>Dahl, Robert 1967. “The City in the Future of Democracy” *American Political Science Review* 61 953-70

and concerns. (4) It is also argued that decentralization is a way of eliminating authoritarian enclaves that dictatorships might have left behind. (5) Finally, decentralization is seen as facilitating governance through partnerships between national government, local government, and civil society.<sup>5</sup>

A recent comparative study of decentralization in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Argentina argues that the decentralization should be seen as important instances of “institutional innovation and invention” that have “provided opportunities for new voices to emerge and for new strategies of political contestation to be introduced.”<sup>6</sup> Decentralization, Grindle suggests, has opened new space for popular contestation and for the emergence of new political actors (such as municipal mayors). In short, a broad body of literature on the subject of decentralization seems to be of the consensus that decentralization is a factor in promoting greater democratization.

These readings of decentralization are rooted in the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed centralizing states as a threat to democracy. Tocqueville believed that centralized states deprived society of the grassroots and intermediate organizations that are essential to counterbalancing the state and to learning democracy.<sup>7</sup> Centralized states corrode democracy because they “diminish civic spirit” and impose an external uniformity on behavior...<sup>8</sup> Decentralized states, by contrast, foster participation, provide a bulwark against state tyranny, and foster the creation of civic spirit. Tocqueville, however, also hinted at the potential ambiguities and contradictions of decentralization by arguing that local government was important in maintaining stability and order (which exists in a state of constant tension with domination and hegemony).

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<sup>5</sup>Diamond, Larry 1999, op.cit. Fox, Jonathan 1994. “Latin America’s Emerging Local Politics” *Journal of Democracy* 5,2 April

<sup>6</sup>Grindle, 2000 op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Tocqueville, Alexis 1983. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* New York; Anchor Books

<sup>8</sup>Tocqueville, Alexis 1988. *Democracy in America* J.P. Mayer (ed.) New York: Harper Perennial p.88

Since the transition to democracy in Chile in 1990 a centerpiece of democratic deepening and consolidation has been continued decentralization and the democratization of municipal governments. The democratization of municipal governments has been promoted by *concertacion* leaders as one of the more significant achievements of democratic deepening in the ten years of concertacion government.<sup>9</sup> Some have argued that in terms of post-transition democratization, decentralization has been the only real bright spot in an otherwise rather bleak picture.<sup>10</sup>

Municipal politics in Huechuraba provides support for some of the arguments made by the neo-Tocquevillian school of thought: decentralization has contributed to the emergence of new voices in politics, to new career avenues for politicians, and it has provided new points of access to the state. As a collective actor, municipalities (mayors) have at times been able to become important as a pressure group within the state. Mayors have been able to use the office of *alcalde* to build important bases of political support as well. In some cases, the office of mayor has also become a springboard to national office.<sup>11</sup> By making demands of the central government on behalf of their constituents, municipal mayors have in certain instances become an important pressure group within the central government. The Chilean Association of Municipalities (AChM) was crucial, for example, in pressuring the Lagos government to extend the duration and scope of what was to be a temporary unemployment program that was begun in 1998 to deal with the economic recession that began in 1997.

The municipality of Huechuraba also highlights several problems with the Tocquevillian thesis. First, decentralization has done little to undermine authoritarian

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<sup>9</sup>Garreton, Manuel Antonio 1995. *Hacia Una Nueva Era Politica Estudio Sobre las Democratizaciones* Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Economica

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Examples are Joaquin Lavín (UDI) who gained national recognition as mayor of Las Condes, and Jaime Ravinet (PDC), former mayor of Santiago, who is seen as a potential presidential candidate for the *concertacion*.

enclaves left behind by the dictatorship, and may actually have helped in the consolidation of the status quo. Grassroots organizations and the municipality of Huechuraba have virtually no role in such issues. The authoritarian edifice upon which the state was anchored during the dictatorship remains in place, which limits the potential that municipal democratization and decentralization have on the broader effort to deepen democracy. Indeed, the municipality of Huechuraba illustrates how decentralization can further insulate the central state from challenges from below. Broadly speaking, then, Huechuraba illustrates how in some instances decentralization can also protect and insulate authoritarian enclaves from challenges from below.

Second, one of the dilemmas of post-transition politics in Chile is that while *concertacion* governments have continued to decentralize and devolve greater responsibilities for social programs and spending to municipalities and regional governments, opinion surveys suggest that people feel that they have very little ability to influence government. Municipal governments like Huechuraba have actively sought to foster popular participation. Yet, people in popular sector municipalities generally continue to express a sense of alienation and disconnectedness from government. The dilemmas associated with this democratic malaise have been a source of considerable concern to *concertacion* policymakers. Indeed, the government of Ricardo Lagos has adopted the mantra of “government closer to the people” (*un gobierno mas cercano a la gente*) as one of its main themes.

Huechuraba also reveals the contradictions of decentralization: while decentralization has opened up space for new patterns of contestation to emerge and new spaces for popular resistance, providing more points of formal access to government, in some ways it has also helped to erect buffers to further democratization. Decentralization has created new arenas for popular participation, while at the same time enhancing social control by facilitating the micromanagement of social conflicts and more effective state oversight of participation and popular resistance. In some contexts, then, decentralization



can actually buttress the hegemony of the existing status quo through atomization and more effective forms of social control.

Decentralization has another dimension that at times has contradicted with the imperatives of democratization: it has also been very important in the management and containment of social conflict in ways that can be undemocratic. Municipalities have been a factor in the demobilization of popular movements because they have contributed to the “compartmentalization” and fragmentation of popular movement networks through administrative enframing. Decentralization has fixed popular movements in spatially defined administrative units that has changed the face of popular contestation. Thus, the impact of decentralization on democracy and the role of the citizen in government is not so clear-cut and straightforward. Instead, the impact of decentralization has been ambiguous and contradictory.

### **Decentralization in Chile: A Brief Overview**

Except for a few brief instances, prior to the Pinochet dictatorship, municipal governments in Chile have largely been of secondary importance. For the better part of the twentieth century, municipalities languished on the sidelines in the context of a strong centralist intellectual climate. Throughout the 20th century, municipal governments saw their prerogatives whittled away by a centralizing state. This process accelerated after the 1930 depression as the central state began to take on increasing responsibilities for economic development and industrialization. The expansion of state responsibility in key issue areas--such as health care and education--further weakened the municipalities. Although there were attempts by municipal governments to regain some of their lost prerogatives, these attempts were few and far between. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the decade of the 1930s should be seen as a period of “neo-centralism” where both the legislature and municipal governments lost power to a centralizing state.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Salazar, Gabriel and Jorge Benitez 1998. *Autonomía, Espacio y Gestión El Municipio Cercenado*

Prior to 1973, local politics in Chile was primarily centered around particularistic demand making on the part of the personal constituents of the mayor. As Valenzuela points out: "Collective action at the municipal level was quite rare; municipal councilors and mayors were primarily individual political entrepreneurs. Their principal goal was to satisfy a multiplicity of demands from their personal constituents."<sup>13</sup> Mayors spent the bulk of their time doing small favors for their constituency. Community organizations and other popular sector groups did not generally bother to establish significant linkages to the municipality because local government simply was not empowered to satisfy the demands of the organized community. Instead, community organizations simply ignored municipal governments and went straight to the central government to have their demands addressed. During the 1950s and 60s, the responsibilities of the municipalities diminished as the central government took on the responsibility for poverty alleviation and development. Poverty alleviation and social programs, such as *promocion popular* in the 1960s, bypassed municipal governments entirely. Interactions with the municipality were generally based on individual patron-client interactions in which the *regidor* (mayor) did small favors for one individual.

The earliest origins of the current impetus to decentralize can be found in the military government's administrative reorganization of the state. Decentralization, then, has its inception in a highly authoritarian intellectual environment, that had little to do with democracy. As early as 1974, when it began to see its mission in terms of a foundational project, the Pinochet regime began to develop the outlines of a program for administrative changes. In 1974, the regime created the National Commission for Administrative Reform (*Comision Nacional Para la Reforma Administrativa*-- CONARA), which was charged with responsibility for developing a long range plan for administrative reform. In 1976,

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Santiago: LOM Ediciones

<sup>13</sup>Valenzuela, Arturo 1977. *Political Brokers in Chile: Local Government in a Centralized Polity* Duke University Press p.73

the military began to implement a process of administrative reform that was designed to strengthen the role played by municipal and regional governments in the administration of social policy. Administrative reform would take place in two phases. In the first phase, regionalization--the transfer of certain administrative functions to regional governments--was carried out, and in the second phase, resources and responsibilities were transferred to municipalities.

By the time that the military left power in 1990, several important programs were being administered by municipal governments, among them subsidies to families, pension assistance, subsidies for drinking water and sewage, and certain housing programs. They were also given considerable responsibilities in the areas of health care and education. Municipal governments were also internally reorganized by creating planning, social, and community departments. A new law on taxes gave municipal governments the right to levy certain taxes and thus to develop their own resource base. Programs for the professionalization of municipal employees were also put in place.

During the dictatorship, however, the objectives of administrative decentralization had little to do with democratization. Instead, decentralization and deconcentration were originally contemplated as a means of more efficiently carrying out and focalizing social policy and as a more effective tool of social control. The logic was one where the central government exercised power, while the municipalities were charged with responsibility for administering and executing programs.<sup>14</sup> Municipal governments were also assigned the task of developing a data base that could be used to classify the population according to different social and economic criteria. That is, they were charged with responsibility for making the communities in their jurisdictions less opaque and more visible from the center.

Municipalities were also seen as the centerpiece of citizen participation in a "protected" democracy. Following the 1980 plebiscite that approved a new constitution

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<sup>14</sup>CEPAL 1995. "La Municipalización de Servicios Sociales en Chile" Santiago: CEPAL

that enshrined the concept of “protected democracy”, the military began a process of “reorganizing participation,” with the objectives of reconfiguring popular participation and building a base of support for the regime among popular sector groups. Central to the regime’s long range plans for a transition to a “protected democracy” was a fundamental reorganization of civil and political society. A centerpiece of this reorganization was to foster a new form of participation that was centered around small atomized community organizations--neighborhood councils, mother’s centers, and senior citizens organizations--acting at the local level. These groups would be empowered to articulate concrete and tangible demands in a compartmentalized and depoliticized local space of the municipality. This type of local, depoliticized participation was touted as “real” participation, where citizens would have real influence over local government policy and where participation would not be tainted by the “vice of politics and demagoguery.” In short, reorganizing participation around the municipality was seen as one vehicle for ensuring the continuity of the social order.

The *concertacion* took office in 1990 committed to carry on and expand the decentralization process. By the 1990s, decentralization and action at the local level had become central elements of a hegemonic discourse of economic and political development. One of the centerpieces of the *concertacion*’s campaign for the presidency in 1989 was to call for the continuation and expansion of the process of municipal decentralization and for the democratization of municipal government (i.e. making municipal offices elected officials instead of appointed officials). By the time that the *concertacion* took power, the municipalities already had accumulated a wealth of experience as agents in community management and development. They had also begun to develop an institutional identity. Aside from the democratization of municipal offices, the decentralization process has built upon and expanded the process that was begun by the military in the latter 1970s. That is, the basic institutions were already in place, and by the time of the transition, municipal governments had established a presence in their communities.

In terms of its basic contours, the process of decentralization has had a functional component and a territorial component. Territorially, the number of municipalities in the metropolitan region of Santiago was increased from 16 to 32 by creating more municipalities, which has "brought government closer to the people" but at the same time has meant even greater fragmentation. Functionally, an increasing number of activities have been devolved to the municipalities in the areas of health care, education, social welfare and assistance, and urbanization. The block grants that are earmarked for municipal government have been increased as well. State agencies that work closely with community organizations, such as FOSIS and the National Service for Women (SERNAM) have also begun to establish offices within municipal governments in an effort to further deconcentrate social services.

The policies of the *concertacion* were geared toward deepening the process of decentralization in three areas: (1) Continuing the process of administrative reform, which has consisted in providing the municipalities with more responsibilities and functions that were previously carried out by the central government. The military began by municipalizing public education, and by making municipalities responsible for the provision of primary health care. The *concertacion* has given the municipalities important functions in social welfare programs and in social development. Municipal governments share a role with the state in the following areas: social assistance, public health, education, public housing, and social development.<sup>15</sup>

Municipalities also function as a bridge between the central government and the community in programs of community development. They are also crucial in the attempt to create civic communities and shape citizenship. However, the relationship between municipal governments and the state is complex. On the one hand, municipalities are

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<sup>15</sup>Serrano, Claudia 1995. "Municipio, Política Social, y Pobreza" *Políticas Económicas y Sociales en el Chile Democrático* Cristostomo Pizarro, Dagmar Raczynski, and Joaquin Vial (eds.) Santiago: CIEPLAN

given legal jurisdiction and recognition as a corporate actor in the 1980 constitution. At the same time, however, municipal governments--particularly popular sector municipalities--are dependent on the state for funding, which severely limits their capacity as an autonomous actor.<sup>16</sup>

(2) A second component of the *concertacion*'s decentralization policy has been to implement budgetary reforms designed to increase the fiscal autonomy of the municipalities. The state has created and expanded a range of different funds that operate in the form of block grants to municipal governments. The common municipal fund (*Fondo Comun Municipal*)--a fund in which wealthier municipalities contribute a percentage of their revenues to a pooled fund that is then redistributed to the poorer municipalities--was expanded. In addition, a National Regional Development Fund that was first created in the late 1970s during the dictatorship (*Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Regional*--FNDR) was expanded considerably. The FNDR has been defined as the "primary financial instrument of decentralization" and accounts for approximately 39% of the funds that the state provides to municipal and regional governments.<sup>17</sup> For poorer municipalities, the FNDR has been the primary source of funds from the state. There are also a myriad of programs available from different ministries and agencies that provide funds to municipalities. Decisions on how to spend and distribute these funds are in many cases made locally. Moreover, the state has enacted laws that create a community development fund (*Fondo de Desarrollo Vecinal*--FONDEVE) where 7 percent of municipal revenues must be distributed to community organizations. The amount of revenues that are spent by local governments has increased to over 40% of government spending during the ten years of *concertacion* government.

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<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Ministerio del Interior Subsecretaria de Desarrollo Regional y Administrativo 1996. *Evaluacion Ex-Post FNDR 1990-1994*. Santiago

(3) Political reforms, that are oriented toward the democratization of the municipalities and toward the creation of a “new system of participation.”<sup>18</sup> The most important political reform has been the democratization of municipal government. In 1992, the offices of the mayor and seats on the municipal council--which had previously been appointed by the president--became elective offices. In democratizing municipal governments, the *concertacion* was able to implement one set of reforms which could potentially constitute a vehicle for a significant deepening and expansion of democracy: the democratization of municipal governments. One of the main arguments of the *concertacion* was that democratizing local governments by making the office of mayor and the municipal council elected officials would make municipal governments more beholden to the will of the residents of the municipality.

The democratization of the office of mayor and seats on the municipal council was in part a response to popular sector demands for the democratization of municipal government.<sup>19</sup> As we saw, following the transition, community organizations in several municipalities organized to demand that municipal government be democratized. Many organizational leaders believed that democratization would give grassroots organizations more leverage over the actions of municipal government. *Concertacion* leaders also saw democratization of municipal governments as a way to oust many mayors that had been appointed by Pinochet before he left power. That is, the democratization of municipal government was seen as a tool for bypassing some of the authoritarian enclaves that the regime had left in place.

The democratization of municipal government has been a multi-dimensional process involving: (1) the office of mayor, which under the military was an appointive office (mayors were selected by the minister of the interior), was turned into an elective

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<sup>18</sup>Ministerio del Interior SUBDERE, 1999. Programa de Fortalecimiento Municipal

<sup>19</sup>See the case study of Huechuraba for more details on this.

office in 1992. (2) Seats on the municipal council were also democratized. (3) The *concertacion* also created Economic and Social Councils (*Consejo Economico y Social*--CESCO) to replace the community development councils (*Consejo de Desarrollo Comunitario*--CODECO) that were put in place during the dictatorship. CESCOs are comprised of the leaders of different sectors of the community (neighborhood council leaders, leaders of functional organizations--such as women's centers, senior citizens groups, etc--and business associations), whose role is to advise the mayor and the municipal council and to articulate the concerns of the organized community. In effect, CESCOs are constituted as space where the organized community can articulate its concerns vis a vis the municipality. CESCOs, then, are designed to function as a kind of oversight committee that are empowered by law to voice their opinion concerning the actions of municipal government. Municipalities are required to seek the opinion (but not the consent) of the CESCO on matters concerning community development. CESCOs, however, have no legal power over the actions of municipal government--their role is solely to advise the mayor and the municipal council.

In the policies advanced by the *concertacion*, social participation centered around municipal governments was seen as one of the main vehicles for achieving popular sovereignty, and for social development.<sup>20</sup> *Concertacion* planners argued that decentralization would help in solving three dilemmas: first it would be instrumental in "perfecting democracy by improving mechanisms of participation and representation." Decentralization would provide "spaces for participation and cooperation with community organizations."<sup>21</sup> Secondly, decentralization would be a vehicle for state modernization because it would make the state more efficient by improving the quality and delivery of

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<sup>20</sup>MIDEPLAN 1992 *Participacion de la Comunidad en el Desarrollo Social Logros y Proyecciones* Santiago

<sup>21</sup> *Concertacion de Partidos Por La Democracia* 1995. "Un Gobierno Para los Nuevos Tiempos Bases Programaticas del Segundo Gobierno de la Concertacion" Santiago



public service. Third, because the delivery of social services was more efficient, municipalization was seen as central to the alleviation of poverty. Following a neo-Tocquevillian logic, then, *concertacion* policymakers (as well as influential NGOs associated with the *concertacion*) argued that decentralization would be the harbinger of more democracy—it would create and facilitate participation by making government more accessible to the people, and it would contribute to the generation of the social capital and civic culture that supports stable democratic politics.

“The challenge of decentralization” as was pointed out in a seminar on decentralization hosted by the ministry of planning and the United Nations Program for Development, is to “*construct a public culture of collaboration, of cooperation, that privileges the establishment of alliances throughout the territory.*”<sup>22</sup> This statement hints at the contradictory nature of decentralization. The effort to construct a “public culture of collaboration and cooperation” has entailed regulating participation in subtle ways that can stifle differences and attempt to impose a dominant view of participation and the role of the citizen.

### **The “Tyranny of Decentralization”**

There is little question that the political and administrative decentralization of urban Santiago—a metropolitan area of some 5.5 million people--into smaller territorially defined municipalities is having a significant impact on political life in Chile. The question, however, is what kind of an impact? Asked a different way, the question is whether the devolution of functions to local governments serves to bolster and deepen democracy? If so, does it work by amplifying the voice of the people (making it more audible to the state) or by fragmenting it, distorting it, and making it more manageable (thus deepening the fortifications that surround and protect the established status quo)? These questions

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<sup>22</sup>Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación 1999. *Reflexión y Análisis Sobre el Proceso de Descentralización en Chile*. Santiago: MIDEPLAN/PNUD

can be examined from the perspective of popular social movements. One of the effects of decentralized systems on the politics of popular movements can be--as Tarrow has observed--to induce a moderating effect within the politics of popular organizations: "Because they invite criticism and participation, decentralized systems frequently 'process' the most challenging elements out of popular politics."<sup>23</sup>

How is it that demands for fundamental changes in the social order are squelched in favor of piecemeal localized petitions that have little impact on the status quo? How is it that the "most challenging elements of popular politics" are processed out of decentralized systems?

To answer this question, our attention should be drawn to the impact that internal administrative divisions of space within the state have on society and on the capacity of subaltern actors to achieve their goals through collective action. Viewed through the prism of enframing, decentralization can be understood as a change in the architecture of political space. While making government more accessible and providing space for the articulation of piecemeal demands, decentralization has at the same time provided a mechanism for a more even diffusion of power and social control over the surface of society. Decentralization, then, must be viewed as more than a change in jurisdiction over policies. Instead, it must be viewed through the broader rubric of state formation and as one of the cornerstones of enframing, that is, as a way of reorganizing the administrative space within the state (and the political space around the state) that has an impact on political behavior. Decentralization has created and presented a new conception of order in popular communities, and has required that the *pasaje* adjust its political gaze. The legally defined territorial boundaries that denote the limits of a municipality juridically create, in fact and in appearance, a set of administrative structures that subtly shape and

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<sup>23</sup>Tarrow, Sidney 1998. *Power in Movement Social Movements and Contentious Politics* Cambridge University Press p.81

influence popular repertoires of participation. To use a Gramscian metaphor, “*la muni*”--as local government has become popularly known--has emerged to become a fragmented trench system that insulates neo-liberal hegemony by containing and compartmentalizing social conflict within its complex labyrinth of earthworks and ditches. Within the space that is defined by the *muni*, the terms of hegemony and citizenship are negotiated on a daily basis. The municipality mediates a set of complex linkages between the state and popular civil society. On one hand, the *muni* links the state to popular civil society, while on the other it creates a buffer between state and popular civil society. In short, decentralization has created a new political and social arena within which society and state interact: “*la muni*.”

Decentralization, however, has had contradictory effects: on one hand, decentralization has been a vehicle for the compartmentalization, containment, and fragmentation of popular contention. A second effect that follows from the “compartmentalization effect” is what could be called--*pace* Foucault--the panopticon effect: decentralization has made popular civil society more legible to the state. Decentralization, in short, has changed the dynamics of social control. The flip side of changes in the political landscape of domination is that decentralization has at the same time created a new space for popular organization, mobilization, and resistance. Municipal politics, then, exposes the dynamic tension between hegemony and resistance.

One analytical prism through which to assess the emergence of municipal government as a significant political space and its implications for democratic development is to examine the impact that it has had on popular social movement networks, patterns of collective action, and on the development of a subaltern public sphere, or what one scholar<sup>24</sup> has called a “subaltern counterpublic.” In terms of its impact on social

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<sup>24</sup>Fraser, Nancy 1997. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Craig Calhoun (ed.) Cambridge: MIT Press

movement networks, decentralization can be understood as a change in a dimension of the political opportunity structure--consistent characteristics of the political landscape that shape the contours of contentious politics--within which popular movements act.<sup>25</sup> Changes in the structure of political opportunities can have important effects on social movements: they can provide opportunities for the development of movements or they can dampen popular movements.<sup>26</sup>

Because it entails reconfiguring channels of access to the state, decentralization implies a change in the "degree of formal access to the state."<sup>27</sup> Decentralization creates more openings to the state that are more available and accessible to popular movements. It is important, however, to point out that while formal access to the state has expanded at the local level, it has been somewhat canceled out by increased insulation at higher levels of the state where power has become more concentrated in the executive branch of government. Thus, while access to local government has certainly increased--indeed, municipalities have made significant efforts to invite the participation of community groups and citizens--the gap between relatively open and accessible municipal governments and a more insulated state has increased. The state that the *concertacion* inherited from the transition process could be characterized as more inclusive at the periphery (i.e. at the municipal level) and as more exclusive at the center.

The reconfiguration of channels of access to the state has also been a factor in changing the way in which issues are understood, discussed and addressed. A different political idiom is spoken at the municipal level: it is the language of the local, the tangible and the concrete. Municipal governments are not concerned with broad questions of

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<sup>25</sup>McAdam, Doug 1983. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970 Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>26</sup>Tarrow, 1998 op.cit.

<sup>27</sup>Kriesi, Hanspeter 1995. "The Political Opportunity Structure of New Social Movements: Its Impact on Their Mobilization" The Politics of Social Protest Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements Bert Klandermans and J. Craig Jenkins (eds.) University of Minnesota Press

rights. Instead, they focus on the solution of local and tangible problems. In this context, politicized (and potentially divisive) discourses are squelched in favor of immediate solutions that all can agree on. Recentering participation around municipal government, then, has influenced the practices of citizenship. Changes in the structure of access to the state, and in the structure of the space within which associational life unfolds, has also had a concomitant influence on the development of a popular public sphere, and on political deliberation and public minded conversation.

Changes in the administrative organization of points of access to the state, then, has had an impact in two key areas: first, it has influenced the topography of resistance and the repertoires through which resistance is given expression. Second, it has had an impact on the development of a subaltern public sphere.

Decentralization and the increased relevance of local political space, combined with the insulation of national politics, has had a significant impact on the spatial distribution of popular collective action, mobilization, and participation. In the post-authoritarian period, municipal government has emerged to become the focal point of popular participation and contention, which has had ripple effects on popular repertoires of contention. One indicator of the reorientation of popular participation toward municipal government is the spatial (territorial) location and organization of popular protest: instances of contention that take place within the territorial space of the municipality, and that are directed at municipal governments, have increased. At the same time, larger protests directed at the central government have decreased, which together suggest that the focal point of popular collective action has shifted to the local arena.

The spatial compartmentalization of popular protest and contentious collective action within the territorial/administrative space of the "*muni*" was also borne out in interviews with leaders of grassroots organizations. Of 35 organizational leaders that had participated in some type of contentious collective action (demonstration, sit-in, march, occupation of a public space, etc.) since the transition, the bulk of these actions had been

protests that were directed at the municipal government, while only a small percentage involved claims directed at the central government. That is, these 35 leaders recalled participating collectively in a total of 93 instances of contentious collective action since 1991, of which 81 of these moments (or 87%) involved claimmaking vis a vis the municipality. In short, in 87% of the instances of contentious collective action, claims were directed toward municipal officials, while only 13% involved claims against the state.

A random survey of residents in five popular sector municipalities<sup>28</sup> also provides support for the argument that collective action and claimmaking have been “municipalized”. Residents of five popular sector municipalities were asked the following questions:

Figure 7-1

(1) “Have you participated in making a claim<sup>29</sup> (*reclamo*) with the municipality?”

Yes: 32.8% (328)

No: 67.3% (674)

N=1002

(2) “Have you participated in making a claim (*reclamo*) with the central

government?”

Yes: 13.2% (132)

No: 86.8% (870)

N=1002

(3) “Have you visited the municipality for any reason in the past year?”

Yes: 72.1% (722)

No: 27.9% (280)

N=1002

(4) “Have you visited an agency of the central government for any reason in the past year?”

Yes: 21.3% (213)

No: 78.7% (789)

N=1002

<sup>28</sup>Pudahuel, Cerro Navia, Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Lo Espejo and Huechuraba

<sup>29</sup>for the purposes of the question, claims were defined as one of the following: writing or delivering a petition to the municipality or state, march, demonstration, sit-in (*toma*)

This data suggests that the municipality--*la muni*--has emerged as a primary space for citizenship practices such as collective action, claimmaking, and ordinary everyday interactions with government. When this data is considered in light of Valenzuela's study of municipal government in the pre-1973 period--which argued that collective action in the municipality was rare--the data is even more striking. The bulk of popular collective action (ranging from petitioning to sit-ins) is taking place within the confines of the municipality.

The compartmentalization of participation is having an impact on the formation of movement networks. A concrete example of the effect of the compartmentalization of popular politics is provided by the *Coordinadora Poblacional Ochagavia*, a coordinating committee created in the early 1980s that linked several dozen grassroots organizations in the *poblaciones* of the southern sector of Santiago (*Jose Maria Caro, Villa Sur, La Victoria, Santa Olga*, and several others). The *coordinadora* had built a network of organizations--soup kitchens, health care groups, housing committees, committees of the unemployed, and some neighborhood councils--to pressure the state on issues relating to social policy. Decentralization, however, resulted in carving two municipalities out of this one district. This meant that the individual organizations that were associated with the *coordinadora* now found themselves acting within the context of different municipalities, which was one of the factors that led to the eventual dissolution and disarticulation of the coordinating committee. Because organizational leaders began to focus on participation within the administrative space of their particular municipality, the need for a broader coordinating committee was obviated. As attention turned away from the central state and toward local municipalities, the *coordinadora* became less relevant. The decline of the coordinating committee also had a broader impact on the politics of popular movements because it was the coordinating committee that was responsible for developing a common political agenda, while individual grassroots organizations focused on more

immediate and narrow issues. That is, it was at the level of the *coordinadora* that one found the factors that turned popular organizations into a popular movement.

After La Cisterna was administratively divided into two municipalities, the municipalities of La Cisterna and Lo Espejo began to encourage the development of local political communities by inviting and encouraging citizen participation in municipal decisionmaking and by attempting to foster the development of a community identity. Shortly after the transition, signs and placards began appearing throughout popular municipalities exhorting citizens to be proud of their *comuna*, and to participate in the social and political life of the municipality: "Citizen, Come and Participate in the Life of Your *Comuna*" was one of the more common signs. The goal of this drive to increase participation at the local level was to create a sense of civic spirit (*espíritu cívico*). During this early transition period, municipal officials made frequent visits to community centers and neighborhood council offices encouraging community organizations to engage in a dialogue with municipal governments. In short, municipalities engaged in an effort to build a local civil society.

One of the unintended consequences of the attempt to build local civil societies, however, has been to disarticulate broader social movement networks. Organizational leaders who had worked together in the *coordinadora* and who live virtually across the street from each other now rarely even see each other. As one of the former leaders of the *coordinadora* put it:

Once they made two municipalities, and once we began to participate in our own municipal governments, we stopped seeing each other. Now, we see each other once in a while, but only by accident when we run into each other at the bus stop or at a market.<sup>30</sup>

When the municipality of La Cisterna was divided into two municipalities, creating the municipalities of Lo Espejo, and La Cisterna, the dividing line the two of the *comunas* ran

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<sup>30</sup>Interview with Ana Velasquez, former president of the Coordinadora Poblacional Ochagavia, May 2000



directly down the street that divided their respective base level organizations, which meant that the leaders of the *coordinadora* now had to act in the context of two different administrative spaces. The territorial/administrative reorganization of the state in this case contributed to the decline of the broader network that these organizations had created. Shortly after the transition to democracy, the *Coordinadora* withered away and stopped functioning.

Contentious collective action, then, has been too a significant degree compartmentalized within the territorial/administrative space of the municipality. The spatial redistribution of popular contention has an important symbolic effect: the occupation of key central spaces in downtown Santiago (the Alameda, the Plaza of the Constitution, Parque O'Higgins, etc.) for mass public demonstrations has historically been an important strategy of popular organizations (labor unions, shantytown movements, etc.) to pressure the national government into important concessions in the areas of social citizenship rights. Mass demonstrations in downtown Santiago once constituted a powerful form of political pressure on political and economic elites, and were central in popular repertoires of contention. These amounted to a form of political intimidation because they brought the *pasaje* into direct, unmediated contact with bankers, owners of industry, lawyers--in short with Santiago's elite on a terrain in which subalterns have the advantage--the street. As a former participant in mass demonstrations recalled:

When the *momios* saw us in the streets of the *centro*, they would realize that there were millions of us, and that we had power. This was scary to them because on the street their money did them no good, on the streets it was a question of who had more balls...When will you ever see 250,000 of them on the streets of Santiago?...they would rather stay at home behind their walls.<sup>31</sup>

Such demonstrations brought elites face to face with the *pasaje* in a struggle over rights that was expressed on the terrain where the *pasaje* had a tactical advantage: a struggle for control of the central spaces in Chilean society. By contrast, the small scale

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<sup>31</sup>Interview with former communist party militant and activist in Huechuraba November, 1999

confrontations that take place in popular municipalities go almost unnoticed by economic and political elites. Thus, the struggle over public space and the spatial dimensions of contention is an important element of political conflict. The displacement of subaltern politics to fragmented local spaces has changed the dynamics of contention, and insulated the basic pillars of the neoliberal order.

Political elites and state policymakers clearly prefer dispersed, localized modes of contention that take place in municipalities on the periphery of Santiago to mass demonstrations in the center of Santiago. Indeed, over the last two decades, a combination of urban planning policies and the administrative reorganization of the state have been used to compartmentalize and fragment public space and to redefine what constitutes appropriate usages of public spaces in urban Santiago: from an ongoing (yet largely futile) attempt to evict informal street vendors, to the militarization of key areas around the Moneda that have traditionally been spaces in which resistance took place, and to increased electronic surveillance through the placing of cameras around strategic public spaces. The Christian Democratic mayor of Santiago, Jaime Ravinet, responding to pressure from businessmen, made significant efforts to clear the downtown areas of Santiago and to make the area safer for legitimate businesses. Joaquín Lavín, his successor has continued many of these policies. There has been a conscious effort to change the social relations that permeate public spaces, and to disperse subaltern populations to the geographic peripheries of Santiago. In short, there has been an effort to rationalize, sanitize, and depoliticize the urban space of the center of Santiago.

Decentralization should be also be examined in this light--as part of the panoply of tools that have served to reorganize the spatial dimensions of conflict. The fragmentation and compartmentalization of subaltern repertoires creates an appearance of order and stability, and helps to sustain the image of a strong state that has popular legitimacy and is not susceptible to pressure politics. When it takes place in popular municipalities, public protest and popular discontent become less visible to investors and capitalists, who see

Chile as an organized society worthy of investment. Furthermore, small scale demonstrations at the local level are more easily co-opted and defused in ways that do not threaten the neoliberal status quo. Indeed, while the state has generally neglected or adopted a more conciliatory attitude toward local protests that take place in popular municipalities, it has reacted very strongly to the few mass demonstrations that have taken place in downtown Santiago. Large scale demonstrations are publicly labeled a “threat to democracy” or a “threat to stability and order.”

The increasing orientation of popular contention toward municipal governments has entailed a change in the spatial topography of collective action. Contemporary popular struggle manifests itself primarily in the form of localized “in between” repertoires of contention: a myriad of microlevel “social struggles where people enter into open protest yet do not seek the overthrow of the social order.”<sup>32</sup> Since the transition, popular struggle has assumed the form of an infinite, seemingly disarticulated series of microlevel contestations that take place primarily within the territorially defined jurisdiction of the municipality. Within the administrative jurisdiction and territorial space of the municipality, forms of resistance oscillate between everyday acts of resistance—evasion of taxes and payments to the state, the establishment of illicit informal businesses in the home, encroaching on public spaces (i.e. the “*tomita*”<sup>33</sup>), etc.—to small scale repertoires of collective action that involve localized confrontations between municipal officials and community organizations and activists. Small scale repertoires of collective action that pit community organizations against municipal government officials have become a standard repertoire of contention<sup>34</sup> since the transition. Peripheral spaces on the margins of society

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<sup>32</sup>Fox, Richard G. and Orin Starn 1997. *Between Resistance and Revolution Cultural Politics and Social Protest* Rutgers University Press p.2

<sup>33</sup>The “*tomita*” is a small scale individual encroachment on public space. Public housing units are often too small to accommodate a family, and thus individual families will add a room onto their apartment that is built on public space and that does not conform to public building codes.

<sup>34</sup>Tilly, Charles 1995. *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758-1834* Cambridge: Harvard University Press

have become the primary stage for popular struggle: the garbage dump, the public housing project, the squatter's *campamento*, the peripheral road, the primary health care clinic, and at times, even the hallways and patios of the offices of the municipality itself have become spaces of contention and struggle. Typically, these confrontations involve small numbers of people (generally no more than two hundred people) and are generally resolved through dialogue between the mayor and representatives of the community (neighborhood council leaders, etc.). On rare occasions the police are called in to end the protest.

The earliest indicators of an emergent repertoire of local collective action could be seen in the late 1970s, when small scale collective actions that were directed at municipal governments first began to take place. The Pinochet regime tended to be somewhat more tolerant of these small scale local protests than they were of large scale demonstrations. That is, because such forms of collective action did not threaten the regime or the implementation of its project, local protests were more likely to be tolerated and dealt with through compromise. Local protests were also less visible and could be dismissed as the actions of a few disgruntled communists. Even though the municipal officials that were appointed by the regime were supporters of Pinochet's project, some of them seem to have been more tolerant and more willing to negotiate with the community on certain issues, so long as demands were framed as tangible and concrete demands that avoided politicized rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Municipal officials also had an incentive to make the communities under their jurisdiction appear orderly. Having to call security forces in to deal with protesters was seen as a sign of disorder (municipal governments did not have an autonomous capacity for repression). This was especially true during the transition period when mayors sought to build linkages to the community with an eye toward building a base of support for governance during the post-transition period.

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<sup>35</sup>Several community leaders made this point.

Women in popular sector communities organized the first instances of local collective resistance against the regime at the local level, when in several popular municipalities (San Miguel, La Cisterna, Pudahuel) they mobilized grassroots organizations to articulate demands for basic consumption items: milk for children, increases in funding for feeding programs, and medical supplies. Women who led semi-clandestine organizations (such as soup kitchens), in short, contested the regime's social welfare policies by making piecemeal demands at the municipality. Generally these demands were articulated through petitions and small demonstrations outside the municipality. In the 1980s, other forms of local protests began to take place: the municipal strike (*paro comunal*) and the municipal sit-in (*toma municipal*) emerged as relatively new repertoires of collective action among popular organizations. During the 1980s, there were several attempts made to paralyze the economies of several low income municipalities by stopping all economic activity in the municipality (*paros municipales*).<sup>36</sup> The emergence in some municipalities of *cabildo comunales*--a gathering of all the organizations in a particular municipality to discuss issues and pressure municipal governments--in the latter stages of the transition and in the immediate post-transition period underscores the increasing relevance of local politics.

Municipalization and decentralization has also been a factor in exacerbating the disarticulation of the social movement networks that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, and in transforming the subaltern counterpublic<sup>37</sup> that these networks housed. Because in the post-authoritarian period popular movements have recentered their activities at the local level and because the state has made an effort to weaken them, the relevance of umbrella federations (which were the most politicized elements of the shantytown dwellers movement) has diminished steadily since the early 1990s.

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<sup>36</sup>SUR Hechos Urbanos 1984

<sup>37</sup>Fraser, 1997 op. cit.

The leadership of umbrella organizations, however, were crucial in shaping key dimensions of the *poblador* movement: first, they translated the tangible, piecemeal demands of base level organizations (demands for consumption) and weaved them into the broader context of an "injustice frame"<sup>38</sup> that contained demands for social citizenship rights and participation rights. That is, piecemeal demands were reformulated as basic rights of citizenship. Second, leaders of umbrella organizations also coordinated the politics of contention: umbrella organizations planned and coordinated confrontational repertoires such as land occupations, organized marches, municipal strikes, and mass demonstrations. The decline and eventual dismantling of the umbrella federations has been an important factor in the decline of urban based popular movements in the post-transition.

*Poblador* federations--such as CUP and METRO--provided base level organizations with a broader vision and a political idiom within which to couch their demands. Because *poblador* federations were for the most part led by political activists and party loyalists, the language that was used by umbrella organizations was more ideological and politicized than that used by small grassroots organizations. Instead of piecemeal demands for the amelioration of an immediate situation, umbrella organizations articulated demands for a broader range of rights in the areas of social and political citizenship. By contrast, base level organizations--soup kitchens, health care co-ops, etc.--generally eschewed politicized language, focusing instead on more immediate objectives. Federations and umbrella organizations, then, were crucial in the social construction of meaning. Umbrella organizations were also crucial in the formation and

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<sup>38</sup>Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford 1992. "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest" *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds.) New Haven: Yale University Press

mobilization of consensus--attempts to build a consensus on issues among certain segments of the population.<sup>39</sup>

Umbrella federations, then, were led by what could be described as the "organic intellectuals"<sup>40</sup> of the *poblador* movement--in this case, organic intellectuals were people who lived in the *poblaciones* and who articulated and interpreted elite political discourses (Marxism, for example) and framed it in terms that were relevant to the *pasaje*. Indeed, since the 1960s, when many of the *poblaciones* were established and began the process of forging viable communities, "organic intellectuals" in the shantytowns have been a linchpin for articulating broader political narratives to popular culture and popular demands. Shantytown "organic intellectuals" were instrumental in the framing activities that symbolically defined and shaped issues: they helped to give a broader meaning to popular grievances and weave them into the context of a political and ideological framework.

In those *poblaciones* that were historically influenced by the left for example, organic intellectuals--generally residents of the *poblacion* who were associated with the communist party--made Marxist discourse relevant and applicable to the dilemmas that confronted people in poor urban communities. Organic intellectuals, then, were important in many *poblaciones* in popularizing Marxist discourse and making it a part of popular culture. Important pillars of Marxist discourse were interpreted and formulated in ways that spoke to the realities of the shantytown and thus became what could be called "common sense" in the process of the struggle for community. Marxist concepts became a part of the popular cultural filter through which *pobladores* understood the world. Understandings of class relations (as exploitative), the role of the state, and the rights of citizens were filtered through this prism. Organic intellectuals also documented and

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<sup>39</sup>Klandermans, Bert 1992. "The Social Construction of Protest and Multiorganizational Fields" *Frontiers in Social Movements Theory*. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds.) Yale University Press

<sup>40</sup>Gramsci, Antonio 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Noxell Smith (editors). New York: International Publishers

interpreted the history and experience of the *pasaje* and framed it within the context of a broader political framework. This “cultural work,”<sup>41</sup> (in which organic intellectuals played a critical role) was crucial in formulating a broader understanding of reality in the *pasaje* and the connections between the *pasaje* and the broader social structure.

Umbrella organizations that linked the political/ideological sphere to the sphere of the tangible and the concrete, however, find little room in institutional/spatial arrangements where a premium is placed on collective action at the local level in pursuit of piecemeal gains and small scale projects, and where the central government is insulated from societal forces by the veto power of the Pinochetista right and other authoritarian enclaves. Peak organizations, whether they be social movement organizations such as METRO and CUP or the metropolitan association of neighborhood councils, are no longer relevant in such a context. Thus, administrative decentralization has contributed to a concomitant decentralization of popular movements, inducing what Tarrow has described as the “tyranny of decentralization”:

Community based movements thrive because they need no special organized efforts to maintain them over time and across space. But their weakness is that autonomy at the base sometimes excludes strong connective ties between center and periphery, making it difficult for leaders to implement coherent strategies.<sup>42</sup>

Not only has it made the implementation of coherent strategies more difficult, decentralization has been a factor in--to paraphrase Habermas--what could be called the structural transformation of the subaltern counterpublic. The “tyranny of decentralization” has had an impact on the landscape of political deliberation and public conversation: the disarticulation of the spaces where organic intellectuals acted to frame and politicize the demands of *poblador* organizations and the concomitant decentralization of the activities of popular movements that has accompanied the administrative reorganization of the state

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<sup>41</sup>Paley, Julia 2001. *Marketing Democracy Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>42</sup>Tarrow, 1998 op. cit. p.131



have contributed to the transformation of a subaltern counterpublic that was instrumental in giving rise to counter-hegemonic discourse. Decentralization, in short, has been one of the factors that has contributed to a change in the public idiom in which grievances are articulated. That is, the compartmentalization of popular struggle to which decentralization has contributed has been a factor in transforming the subaltern counterpublic by further disarticulating tangible concrete issues from a broader global and political context.

Tangible, concrete issues, such as the lack of adequate health care, overcrowding and other problems related to housing, and problems of unemployment, have been to a large extent disarticulated from a broader ideological and political framework, which has had an impact on the inner dynamics of the subaltern counterpublic. The basis of articulation (the process by which identities and understandings of reality are modified through the construction of linkages between different grievances and subaltern moments) which has been crucial in the formation of the discursive tissue that undergirds the emergence of broader popular movements, has been altered by decentralization, where a premium is placed on the tangible and the concrete at the expense of a broader interpretation of reality and where collective organization is compartmentalized within the territorial jurisdiction of *la muni*.

In the case of popular movements in Chile, a central axis around which popular movements can coalesce is virtually non-existent. Indeed, to speak of a "popular movement" as such is difficult because of the lack of a coherent central axis around which to coalesce. While a popular movement continues to exist in latent form, it has relatively little visibility and has accomplished relatively little in the way of tangible gains since the end of the democratic moment.

Municipal governments have become even more relevant as a space for collective action since the transition: the percentage of public spending that is controlled by municipal governments has increased significantly since the transition. Community

organizations, such as neighborhood councils, have found that local governments are in some ways more amenable to their influence and pressure than the much more insulated and distant central government. This is clearly revealed in surveys of leaders of community organizations. Leaders of community organizations (neighborhood councils, mother's centers, and housing committees) in five municipalities<sup>43</sup> were asked the following question: "In your opinion, which of the following institutions has the greatest capacity to solve the problems that affect you?"

Table 7-1

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
Municipality	53%	
National Government	28%	
Church	15%	
Political Parties	4%	(N=98)

It was also clear that organizational leaders felt that they had significantly more influence at the local level than at the level of central government. Community leaders (leaders of neighborhood councils, women's centers, housing committees) were also asked the following question: "Is it easier to have an influence in the decisions made by the municipality or the decisions made by the central government?"

Table 7-2

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
Municipality	48.5% (n=48)	
Central Government	13.1% (n=13)	
No Difference	38.4 (n=38)	(N=99)

The central government was seen by many community leaders as much more remote and inaccessible. Organizing locally, moreover, is much more feasible than organizing on a national level. As Tarrow has noted, it is far easier to organize a local community for collective action than to organize a national level movement: community organizations at the local level interact more frequently, leaders are more familiar with each other, and because they have more extensive interaction with the municipality, they are more able to

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<sup>43</sup>Huechuraba, Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Loa Espejo, Pudahuel, Cerro Navia

understand the constraints under which municipal governments operate. Thus, the problems associated with coordination are easier to manage.

Devolution in spending and policy responsibility to municipalities has increased the political stake that organizations have in municipal politics. While many of these block grants have strings attached to them (i.e. they must be earmarked for a certain general purpose), they give municipalities some leeway in deciding how funds are spent and distributed within the community. Moreover, municipalities have new powers to raise funds themselves through taxation, which has meant that municipalities generate some of their own revenues. Community and organizational leaders now find themselves increasingly oriented to directing pressure on municipal governments in order to influence how these locally generated funds and block grants are to be spent than on interacting with the state. In some municipalities, citizen watchdog groups have also emerged to monitor the activities of municipal officials. In a very real sense, then, municipalization has contributed to the emergence of a local civil society that has in some instances led to the development of local organizational networks.

The potential rewards of collective action at the municipal level, however, are more limited. Despite significant increases in the scope of the policies over which they have control, in relative terms, municipalities still have relatively little leeway in terms of the range of the policies over which they can have an impact. Because they lack jurisdiction over many issues, municipalities are not able to enact laws on many critical issues. For example, changes in basic social citizenship rights in the area of housing, health care, and employment can only be enacted at the national level. Thus, although the amount of resources being spent at the municipal level has increased significantly, the impact that local participation can have on changing state-society relations is limited in scope. Macrolevel policy is formulated and made at the national level, and meaningful

institutional change, as Garreton<sup>44</sup> has pointed out, is to a large extent about making institutional changes at the macrolevel (such as elimination of authoritarian enclaves: constitutional changes, economic democratization, etc.).

The impact of the fragmentation of political space through administrative decentralization, then, has been multi-dimensional. First, popular movements have had to adapt and learn new methods of organizing and of mobilizing. Decentralization has been one of the institutional catalysts for changes in the organizational and collective action repertoires of popular movements, which has led to new forms of collective action, such as the municipal sit-in (*toma municipal*), and other forms of collective action that have municipal governments as their central target. In broadbrush strokes, these new forms of collective action can be seen as giving rise to an emerging local arena of contestation.

### **The Janus Face of the Municipality: The Panopticon Effect**

Decentralization and the democratization of municipal government, then, has had a significant impact on patterns of popular sector participation, and on repertoires of collective action. Several things, however, must be pointed out: first, the low intensity popular struggles that take place in urban low income municipalities go virtually unnoticed at the upper echelons of the state. As one official in the Division of Social Organizations noted, when asked to comment on a protest that had taken place in the municipality of Pudahuel: "Those protests don't even tickle us" (*Esas protestas no nos hacen ni cosquillas*), by which he meant that such small scale protests pose no real threat to the established order and were of no real concern. This same official went on to point out, however, that these protests prove that democracy is flourishing in Chile. Localized, fragmented, and peripheralized repertoires of popular contention are tolerated because while they do not challenge the neoliberal status quo, they do allow the government to credibly claim that there is freedom of association, speech, and participation.

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<sup>44</sup>Garreton, 1995 op. cit.

A second, and more noteworthy, observation is that in interviewing community leaders it also became clear--somewhat paradoxically--that many of them viewed decentralization as a constraint or fetter on participation, and as a way for the government to control popular organizations more effectively. As one community activist observed somewhat sarcastically:

When we participate in FOSIS programs and in municipal PLADECOS, we are acting the way they (the state) want us to act. They gave us these spaces to shut us up. It is our reward for good behavior. But that kind of participation really can't change things.<sup>45</sup>

As we also saw, activists in Huechuraba came up with a diagnosis of participation at the municipal level that challenges the conventional view that decentralization facilitates citizen influence over government. This view of constrained participation was not limited to Huechuraba. Community leaders that I interviewed in other municipalities articulated similar arguments. Decentralization was viewed by many grassroots activists as one of the cornerstones of a "divide and conquer" (*dividir para conquistar*) strategy of political elites. According to these views, the type of participation encouraged in the post-transition is seen as a tool of manipulation instead of as a space for meaningful change. This view was echoed by many organizational leaders with whom I talked. Paradoxically, then, leaders of grassroots organizations felt that while they could exert more influence vis a vis the municipality than vis a vis the state, decentralization has also been a constraint on participation and an obstacle to achieving their objectives.

These contradictory views underscore the Janus-faced nature of decentralization and its relationship to democratization: on the one hand the expanding responsibilities of municipal governments have created new arenas for popular participation, while on the other, these new arenas have not had much of a tangible impact in changing the dynamics of the neo-liberal status quo. One can make sense of these contradictions, I believe, by

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<sup>45</sup>Interview with a president of a neighborhood council president in Loa Espejo, March 2000

observing that one of the pillars of the neo-Tocquevillian thesis--that decentralization facilitates citizen access to government--has an important and often overlooked corollary: bringing popular movements into close contact with the polity makes popular movements more visible and enables municipal government to maintain a closer surveillance and regulation of their activities. Indeed, Huechuraba's community development meetings provide an illustration of the countless encounters that take place between municipalities and grassroots organizations, where participation is ritualized, compartmentalized, and organized into a series of steps and procedures--in short, where participation can become the object of modern disciplinary techniques. This second characteristic--the increasing legibility of popular movements that comes with incorporation into the polity--is a dimension that has not been effectively explored.

As the above analysis suggests, government has been "brought closer to the people" through decentralization. Bringing "government closer to the people" undoubtedly has significant benefits for citizens. It also, however, has the concomitant effect of *bringing the people closer to government*, a process that can facilitate government interventions in society and social control. It is the implications of this corollary impact of decentralization (i.e. "people closer to government") on popular movements and organizations that I now wish to explore.

Decentralization has made the spaces within which the subaltern classes emerge as an actor more accessible and more knowable to the state. Subaltern class fractions--peasants, the urban poor, workers--have often used anonymity and evasion to their advantage. Throughout history, one of the primary weapons of resistance that has been available to subaltern groups and movements has been their ability to evade the state and remain "illegible from the center." As Scott argues: "The relative illegibility to outsiders of some urban neighborhoods has provided a vital margin of political safety from

control by outside elites...Illegibility, then, has been and remains a reliable source for political autonomy."<sup>46</sup>

The autonomy that comes from illegibility, in short, has been an important weapon of the weak.

In Chile, the *poblaciones* that emerged on the periphery of Santiago in the 1950s and 60s were--as previously discussed--in many ways opaque to the central government prior to 1973. Their relative illegibility provided them with a space in which different political and social identities could emerge. In spite of their material poverty, then, the *poblaciones* nevertheless possessed some of the qualities of heterotopia: they were a space where the other could flourish and sustain cultures of opposition.<sup>47</sup> Alternative conceptualizations of justice and fairness, of social order, prevailed in many of these spaces.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, during the 1960s and early 70s, many *poblaciones* engaged in utopian social experiments that were designed to instill a collective ethos and socialist culture in the *poblacion*.<sup>49</sup> Too, this opacity and illegibility provided a measure of safety: in the immediate aftermath of the 1973 coup, for example, the spatial organization and opacity of the *poblaciones* provided some with a measure of shelter from the forces of repression.

In combination with urban policies aimed at the physical reorganization of communities, decentralization has been a factor in reducing the autonomy of popular communities by (1) rendering them more legible and visible from the center, which has enabled the state to compile more comprehensive data on target populations. (2) Second, because they spatially and administratively distribute and segregate populations and social organizations, municipal governments are much better suited to micromanaging and overseeing popular participation than centralized governments. Decentralization allows

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<sup>46</sup>Scott, James 1998. Seeing Like a State How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed Yale University Press p.54

<sup>47</sup>Foucault, Michael "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias"

<sup>48</sup>Paley, 2001 op.cit.

<sup>49</sup>Paley, 2001 op.cit.

for a more meticulous observation and oversight of popular participation because it allows participation to be broken down into smaller and more manageable components (small groups practicing well defined rituals that can be more effectively taught in the small group setting). It is the ideal spatial/administrative setting, then, for the operationalization of the model of participation articulated in the discourse of social participation. At the local level, small groups of people can closely interact with municipal officials (social workers and municipal bureaucrats) and their partners in civil society (NGOs).

### **Inside the Administrative Labyrinth of the “Muni”**

The municipality is a complex territorially defined administrative and social space that has many dimensions associated with it. One of the central tasks that has been assigned to the municipalities by the central government is to foster local “community development,” a term that encompasses many different elements. Community development is defined in economic (raising standards of living and improving community infrastructure), social (culture and civiness), and institutional terms (more efficient administration): “The municipality has at its central objective to seek, *with the participation of community*, the satisfaction of the needs of the community.”<sup>50</sup> Community development is a broad term that includes (1) the creation of spaces for community participation in decision making (i.e. the creation of a local civil society that can become a partner to the municipality in development) and the fostering of civic communities, (2) planning and implementing projects, long term development planning, (3) the distribution of social welfare programs and community development projects, and (4) maintaining and updating a data base on the community--i.e. classifying people and families according to socioeconomic criteria so as to make the delivery of social services

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<sup>50</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1995. “Municipio Organizaciones Sociales y Participacion” Unpublished Document



more efficient and rational. In short, a key requisite for “community development” is for the municipality to know the community.

Community development, then, has two faces, which can exist in tension with each other: the first face is what could be called a “democratic face”: a participatory, democratic component that is centered around the inclusion and incorporation of grassroots associations and movements in the decisionmaking of the municipality. Secondly, however, community development has a “planning face” which is characterized by an impetus toward control and intervention that can be antithetical to some of the basic principles of democracy. Municipal officials tended to be planners and to think in technocratic terms. Although they encouraged community participation, they sought to limit the scope of participation in the name of managing demands and of effective planning. It is this second component of community development that I wish to explore. The second element of “community development”—planning, control, and development—can undermine the democratic effect that results from the participatory dimension. Indeed, it is this technocratic mindset of planning and control that often prevails at PLADECOs and other encounters between municipal officials and the organized community.

Mirroring the state’s discourse of social participation, much of the language in which the participatory dimension of community development is framed is the language of “managing” popular participation and channeling it in “proper directions.” As the director of community development in Cerro Navia put it: “These people have to be taught how to participate in a democracy...this is a skill that they don’t know. All they know is how to do hold their hand out and demand things.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the director community development in Pudahuel argued that the mission of the office of community development should be to “teach *dirigentes* what is and is not possible...what their responsibilities are,

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Jorge Castro, director of Community Development in the Municipality of Cerro Navia

and ways to fulfill those responsibilities.”<sup>52</sup> The assistant director of DIDECO in the municipality of Lo Espejo, for example, defined part of her role as “orienting them to the right forms of participation...the *dirigente* (organizational leader) can’t come to the municipality and demand things, they must learn how to participate and work with the municipality.” Comments such as these are couched in what Scott called the idiom of social engineering, where “society is an object that the state might manage and transform with a view toward perfecting it.”<sup>53</sup> Decentralization has in effect given municipalities a central role in overseeing and managing popular participation. More broadly stated, the municipalities have been given a central role in attempting to build a *habitus* of citizenship that is couched within the framework of a neo-Tocquevillian ethic.

The administrative division of the municipality that is most closely involved with the community is the Directorate of Community Development (*Direccion de Desarrollo Comunitario*--DIDECO). By statute, each municipality must have an office of community development that serves as the primary locus of interaction between the municipality and community organizations. Some DIDECOs are better organized and developed than others. Nevertheless, despite the disparities in the extent to which they are developed, DIDECOs are key administrative divisions of public space within which popular organizations carry on a dialogue with state authority.

In the municipality, it (DIDECO) is the primary and most direct channel of communication between the municipality and the community. In this way, in order to put into practice any community initiative, it is necessary to contact this department. DIDECO is responsible for advising and coordinating the community on these matters.<sup>54</sup>

The function of DIDECO, then, is to work with the organized community to help community organizations learn how to participate to obtain funding for particular projects that the state makes available, and more generally to encourage participation in community

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<sup>52</sup>Interview with Jorge Vea, director of Community Development in the Municipality of Pudahuel

<sup>53</sup>Scott, 1998 op. cit. p.92

<sup>54</sup> Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1995. “Municipio, Organizaciones Sociales y Participación”

organizations and develop citizenship practices. DIDEcos oversee and coordinate the relationship between the municipality and the community, and are the gateway between local associations and the resources of the state and the municipality. One example of this role is the community development plan (PLADECO), where DIDECO officials play a central role in shaping the practices of participation. These are the primary spaces where participation occurs and where the citizenship practices are learned. *Pace* Tocqueville, then, DIDEcos are schools where citizenship is learned through practice.

DIDEcos have a major role in assigning and distributing social welfare and community development projects. DIDECO officials (social workers, bureaucrats) assist people in obtaining information and in filing the needed documents to obtain family subsidies, housing subsidies, and other benefits that are funded by the state. On any given weekday in the morning, one can go to a DIDECO office in a popular sector of Santiago and see community leaders busily going from office to office trying to obtain funding for some project that will benefit their community: a new park, pavement for the roads, a new social center for the community, etc. DIDEcos, then, can be understood as a space where hegemony is manufactured on a daily basis.

The local community development office is also one of the primary bridges between community organizations and state ministries that have a role in community development (MIDEPLAN, FOSIS, SERNAM, etc.). DIDEcos also work closely with state agencies to obtain the funding that is used for community development projects where community organizations can compete for project funds. State level ministries and agencies have begun to decentralize their own offices by opening offices within municipal DIDECO offices. The National Service for Women (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer*--SERNAM) and the National Solidarity Fund (FOSIS) have both begun to open branch offices in popular sector DIDECO offices. Ministries that deal with social policy (housing and health care) also have worked with local DIDEcos to organize "citizen dialogues" (*dialogos ciudadanos*) where the views of the organized community are

solicited by ministry officials.<sup>55</sup> These meetings take place in the municipality and bring representatives of government ministries and the organized community together. In short, DIDECO is a space of encounter (and tension) between popular culture and the state.

The knowledge and information about community development and social welfare services that DIDECO social workers possess has in many instances been used as the basis for the creation of clientelist cliques and networks. By virtue of their access to the state, DIDECOs control key resources and knowledge that have been used as a tool of social control vis a vis popular organizations. For example, because DIDECO is the primary link between the municipality and state social agencies such as FOSIS and SERNAM, DIDECO officials learn first hand of funding available for community development projects. They also issue recommendations concerning which projects should get funded. They review project proposals submitted by community organizations and assign priority to them, which gives them considerable power vis a vis community organizations. They also have connections with NGOs and other non-governmental agencies through which projects are distributed. In short, through DIDECO, the municipalities are assigned a key role in the process of social and economic development and of fomenting and managing popular participation.

Within the department of community development there is also generally a subdepartment of community organizations (*Departamento de Organizaciones Comunitarias--DOC*), which is directly responsible for organizing the day to day relations with the leadership of the organized community (neighborhood council leaders, women's center leaders, leaders of housing and health care committees, etc.). The DOC advises community organizations on legal matters and "instructs organizational leaders with respect to the functioning of their organizations and the role that leaders carry out within

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<sup>55</sup>Luz Nieto, Maria 1998. "Participacion en el Sector Vivienda" *Nociones de Una Ciudadania que Crece* Enrique Correa and Marcela Noe (editors) Santiago: FLACSO

the organization.”<sup>56</sup> The role of the municipal DOC is, in short, to encourage, regulate, and manage popular participation: “This department (DOC) must orient community organizations and its leaders toward a solution of its problems and must play a role in properly channeling their demands.”<sup>57</sup> DOCs, then, are involved in the daily process of government, understood as the attempt to manage and oversee a particular subset of the population. DOCs are charged with instilling appropriate practices of citizenship--i.e. the practices of participation that are acceptable and legitimate in a neoliberal polyarchy. Thus, DOCs are charged with the responsibility for creating citizens.

Internally, DOCs are administratively organized in a way that constitutes a reflection of the lens through which the state and municipal planners imagine and understand civil society--as an organized space populated by small, grassroots organizations that are functionally and territorially defined and compartmentalized and which deal with the municipality mainly on an individual basis: DOCs are internally compartmentalized into offices for women’s organizations (*oficina de la mujer*), for neighborhood councils (*oficina de juntas de vecino*), for youth groups (*oficina del joven*), for senior citizens groups, soccer clubs, etc. Each of these offices has responsibility over a particular subset of community organizations, which ensures relatively close interactions between the municipality and the *dirigente* (community leader). Each subset of community organizations is assigned to a particular group of social workers who are charged with knowing the *dirigentes*, and with seeing them and working with them on a regular basis.

Entering the office for neighborhood councils of the DOC in the municipality of Huechuraba (or of any other municipality) it is possible to see local civil society and the organized community as it is imagined from the vantage point of the state. On the wall in

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<sup>56</sup>ibid.

<sup>57</sup>ibid. (italics added)

the office of neighborhood councils was a large map of the *comuna* of Huechuraba with its *poblaciones* (*La Pincoya, Patria Nueva, Villa El Rodeo, Pablo Neruda, Villa Wolf*, etc.) neatly divided up into rectangular neighborhood units (*unidades vecinales*) that were clearly delineated and numbered. The lines that divide each neighborhood unit were denoted with thick black markers. Each neighborhood unit, housing a neighborhood council, is a square or a rectangle, generally encompassing one *poblacion* (or a fraction of a *poblacion*). The determination of the boundaries of these units was determined historically: as the communities were created and applied for legal recognition, they became recognized as an “*unidad vecinal*”. Individual units are color coded according to their socioeconomic status--a complicated statistic compiled from the CASEN survey discussed above. Each *unidad vecinal* is classified according to the percentage of the population in that unit that falls into a particular socioeconomic category. Thus, for example, in neighborhood unit #39, which encompasses the *poblacion* Pablo Neruda, 2.1% of the population is considered indigent, 40.9% of the population is considered poor, and 57.0% falls into the category of “not poor.” Overall, the population of Huechuraba is divided more or less evenly: 3.3% of the population is indigent, 47.1% is poor, and 49.7% is “not poor”.<sup>58</sup>

Each of these neighborhood units had a neighborhood council with a council leadership (because of freedom of association laws, some now have more than one council, which has precipitated often bitter conflicts in the community). The location of the council office is highlighted in red on the map. Nailed to the wall beside the map was a clipboard with a list of all of the leaders of neighborhood councils with their addresses and phone numbers. Files with details of each community organization (elections, meetings, records of the *junta's* history etc.) are kept in file cabinets, along with details of

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<sup>58</sup>The category of “not poor” is an all encompassing term, but in Huechuraba the people in this category are primarily working class. The dictatorship built housing complexes for military personnel in Huechuraba during the 1980s, and residents of these areas would be considered lower middle class.

FOSIS programs, and other participatory activities for the community. On one of the desks was a stack of petitions written by council leaders that require the attention of the municipality. The demands contained in these petitions are wide-ranging--some denounce mistreatment by a municipal office, others bring problems in the community to the attention of the municipality, others ask for personal favors such as medicine for a sick child, or a letter of reference from the mayor. *Dirigentes* from different councils periodically stream in and out of the office seeking information on social programs, or answers to questions concerning particular issues.

The map and the internal organization of the DOC provide metaphors that enable us to understand the state's role in reorganizing and restructuring civil society. The office of community development is at the forefront of the state's attempts to shape the contours of civil society through a process of enframing. This can also be seen in the way in which the space within DOC offices are organized. The DOC in the municipality of *Lo Espejo*, for example, is housed in a large room that is partitioned off into small cubicles for each sector of the organized community. The distribution of the internal spaces within DIDECO and DOC offices can be understood as a reflection of the way in which the state subtly attempts to enframe civil society. This form of compartmentalization is an attempt to create the appearance of a particular structure and order, and can be seen as a reflection of the way that the state (and municipality) imagines and distributes social space within civil society. In creating administrative divisions for each sector of local civil society, the DOC, in effect imposed a particular structure on civil society. Thus, within DIDECO a particular understanding of reality was structured and organized: citizens were spatially distributed according to the imaginary map of DIDECO, which in itself is a vital part of the disciplinary process. Indeed, the spatial distribution of individuals is a crucial dimension of discipline.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit.

Since the transition in 1990, the leaders of community organizations have become enmeshed in a close web of relationships with DIDECO/DOC personnel. The spatial location of DIDECO offices in relation to the Union of Neighborhood Councils in some municipalities underscores the closeness of the relationships that have developed between community leaders and municipal officials: in several of the municipalities that I visited (*La Pintana, Pedro Aguirre Cerda*), the Union of Neighborhood Councils was spatially located in the same physical complex as DIDECO, which enabled community leaders to remain in close contact with DIDECO officials (and by extension DIDECO leaders can more effectively oversee the community). The spatial location of a key sector of local civil society within the administrative labyrinth of the municipality also provides a graphic illustration of the increasingly blurred lines between state and civil society. The closeness of the relationship between the organized community and the municipality is also underscored by the scenes in DIDECO offices: on any given day of the week, the DIDECO office in Huechuraba was crowded with leaders of Huechuraba's community organizations seeking meetings and audiences with social workers and DIDECO officials.

Many leaders of community organizations have come to view themselves and the neighborhood councils as extensions of the municipal government in their communities and argued that because they provide valuable services to the government, they should be given a salary from the municipality. Many neighborhood council leaders, in particular, saw their organizations as defacto extensions of municipal government. Neighborhood councils are also an important source of information for municipal officials and thus they perform a valuable role for the municipality: surveillance. The state and the municipality simply do not have the resources to have officials "in the field" (i.e. in the communities) on a constant basis, and thus they have come to depend on council leaders for information about their communities. As one of the leaders of a neighborhood council in Huechuraba--who was complaining about the lack of municipal reciprocity--put it:

*Chih*, we do a lot of things for the municipality...we tell the mayor about pro-



blems in the *pobla*, so that he knows what is going on. If we didn't exist, they would have a lot of problems with the community because they would not know what's happening in the *pobla*...<sup>60</sup>

Without the flow of information provided by council leaders and other community activists, the *pasajes* of the *comuna* would be considerably more opaque to the municipality. Neighborhood councils (in broader terms, local civil society), then, buttress a key imperative of the municipality: the imperative of seeing and reading the community. Legibility, as Scott has noted, is a key asset of the state.<sup>61</sup> The councils aid the enframing process by making the spaces created by decentralization more visible to municipal government. Comments like these also underscore the complex dynamics of the relationship between civil society and the state. Neighborhood councils have contradictory qualities: while they are spaces in which various forms of community resistance is organized, at the same time they are instrumental in the architecture of post-authoritarian hegemony.

The closeknit relationship between *dirigentes* and DIDECO officials is further underscored by the amount of time spent by the *dirigentes* at DIDECO. Most of the organizational leaders that I interviewed visited DIDECO at least once a week, and it was not unusual for some organizational leaders to go almost daily to DIDECO.

Table 7-3

<u>Average Number of Visits to DIDECO per week</u>	
<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Number of Visits</u>
Neighborhood Council leaders	3.3
Women's Center leaders	2.7
Union of Neighborhood Councils	3.6
Housing Committee leaders	1.7

These visits could often take up the better part of a morning, as leaders venture from one office in DIDECO to another. The primary mode of interaction took the form of a dyadic encounter between a *dirigente* and a DIDECO official. Sometimes, two or three members

<sup>60</sup>Interview with Pilar Macaya, neighborhood council president in Huechuraba. October, 2000

<sup>61</sup>Scott, 1998 op.cit.

of the leadership of the particular organization would go to DIDECO together, but this was rather rare. Moreover, the DIDECO is the government office (both local and state) that was most frequently visited by community leaders.

Table 7-4

Government Office Most Frequently Visited by *Dirigentes*

Office	Number of Mentions
DIDECO (DOC)	65
SECPLAC <sup>62</sup>	19
Social Welfare Offices	14
Municipal Council Member	12
Central Government Ministry	4

As the above data suggests, DIDECOs have emerged to become an important space in the relationship between state and society. Thus, they constitute an important space in the everyday process of negotiating post-transition hegemony. Everyday encounters between *dirigentes* and DIDECO social workers has become etched into the social practices of the community, and have become an important structure in the habitus of citizenship.

The relationships that developed between social workers and the *dirigentes* were in many cases very close and intimate. Many social workers in Departments of Community Organizations knew intimate details about community leaders--their family problems, their political histories, employment and income problems that they might be having, even the conflicts that they might have with their neighbors. They were abreast of the political rivalries within the *poblacion* and of the struggles that took place between different factions within the *pasaje*. In short, they knew the strengths and weaknesses of the community, and they played on these weaknesses to divide the community even further. In many cases, however, social workers lived outside the community, and thus were less visible to the community than the community is to social workers--their social existence outside the DOC remained opaque to movement leaders. The way in which

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<sup>62</sup>SECPLAC--Secretaria de Planificacion (Planning Department)

DOC offices are administratively organized and compartmentalized, in short, has been effective in making popular organizations more visible, transparent, and legible--which can facilitate social control.

The close linkages that have developed between DIDECO and the *dirigentes*, however, are built on a foundation of co-optation--i.e. the incorporation of the *dirigente* into limited areas of government decision-making in exchange for reducing their demands on the municipality and for providing the municipality with information about the community. A key part of the exchange that underpins the co-optive relationship is information: *dirigentes* keep DIDECO and the municipality informed and updated about the community. They provide information about community problems and about the general mood of the community. *Dirigentes* also provide information about each other to DIDECO social workers. Co-optation, then, has helped the municipality to see the community. Co-optation also acts as a gatekeeper on demands from the community by controlling the quantity and type of demands that reach the municipality. In return, the *dirigente* gets greater access to municipal government, and to information about government policy. Co-optation, then, is a strategy used by the *dirigente* to make the municipality more visible. The municipality, like the state, extends its presence in local civil society and in the community through the networks that arise between municipal bureaucrats in DIDECO and organizational leaders in the community.

The relationship between DIDECO officials and the *dirigentes*, however, was itself Janus-faced and shot through with ambiguities and contradictions. On the surface, interactions between DIDECO officials and organizational leaders were friendly, easygoing, and cordial. In Huechuraba, friendly banter was exchanged between *dirigentes* and the social workers as they discussed a range of questions: funding for projects, upcoming seminars, etc. But, beneath this calm, easygoing surface, there was a latent tension that was often difficult to detect. This tension was driven by the fundamental opposition between the two: the DIDECO official was there to control participation and

to manage and channel demands--i.e. to exercise social control--while many *dirigentes* often found these attempts to control and channel demands to be restrictive of basic rights, to be stifling, and to be an insult to his or her dignity. Many *dirigentes* were always seeking ways to gain greater access to decisionmaking, and to expand their role in decisionmaking.

Beneath the friendly dialogue between the *dirigente* and the social worker there was often a faint, yet palpable, air of unease. From the perspective of some DIDECO officials, an important source of tension was related to the way in which the *poblacion* has been imagined and understood. The *poblaciones* have often been pictured as dark, unpredictable places where outsiders can never be at ease because of the potential for aggression that lurks just beneath what would seem to be a calm exterior. Indeed, short lyrical sayings were invented to symbolize and depict the dangers of life in the *poblaciones*. One saying that I remember vividly when I was growing up in Chile was:

*Sangre, cuchillo, velorio*  
*poblacion San Gregorio*

Blood, knife, funeral  
*poblacion San Gregorio*

This short saying is based upon a narrative that is a familiar refrain in many circles. A lawyer who worked in the *poblaciones* during his law school days warned me to be on guard when dealing with the *pobladores*: "They are masters at stealing things, you always have to be on guard, because if you get distracted they will take whatever you have." Indeed, a dominant view of the *poblador* that is rooted in historical narratives is that he/she cannot be trusted because he/she is always trying to take too much. This narrative provided a metaphor for many municipal officials who understood state-society relations in these terms. As one of the officials in DIDECO in Huechuraba put it:

They are always trying to get things from the municipality...that is why they come here, and we have to keep an eye out...with some of them you must be careful because if you give them your hand they want your arm."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Comment made by a DIDECO official in Huechuraba June 2000

Social workers also worried that some *dirigentes* (particularly those who are affiliated with the communist party) could become unruly and demanding, and that under the right circumstances, the situation could become confrontational. As one DIDECO official put it:

Most of the time, the *dirigentes* are easy to deal with, but sometimes they get out of control when they don't get something they want. I've had them screaming at me, and even throwing things at me. One time a group of them showed up at my office with sticks and took over my office. That is why one can never count on anything. That is why we have to teach many of them how to participate...some of them *have very little culture* and some have very bad manners.<sup>64</sup>

From the perspective of this official, *dirigentes* have a certain unpredictable quality--they "lose control" at unpredictable times. This unpredictability is part of an imaginary that originated in the 17th century and that has understood the poor as always one step away from delinquency, or as "potential delinquents."<sup>65</sup>

The perception of the poor as always on the brink of delinquency, however, generates a tension that is an important component of the dynamic of power--particularly at the municipal level where relationships are often highly personalistic--that has at times worked to the advantage of community leaders, who often use these perceptions and latent fears as a tool to extract resources from the municipality. At the local level, anger and rudeness and the latent fears and social constructions of realities upon which these play, is often used as a tool to extract concessions from the municipality. Indeed, many decisions in the municipality are often the result of a test of wills between the DIDECO official and the *dirigente*. When Lidia Silva--president of the Union of Neighborhood

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<sup>64</sup>Interview with DIDECO social worker in the municipality of Lo Espejo, May 2000. The time that he had women with sticks in his office was precipitated when the municipality tried to shut the water off for residents of *campamento* Las Turbinas in an effort to put pressure on the *campamento* to leave Lo Espejo. The women of the community went to the *muni* with sticks and demanded that the municipality turn the water back on.

<sup>65</sup>Salazar, Gabriel 1995. *Labradores, Peones y Proletarios Formacion y Crisis de la Sociedad Popular Chilena del Siglo XIX*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones

Councils of Lo Espejo--walks into the DIDECO in Lo Espejo, for example, officials will get visibly tense because Lidia is demanding and will not back down from her demands. She is also a shrewd activist. A social worker at DIDECO described an encounter that he had with Lidia in her community that ended with Lidia holding rocks in her hand and challenging the official to a fight.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Lidia is known among officials at DIDECO as someone who is not to be trifled with. Entire *poblaciones* have built reputations as being fierce, which also influences the calculus of decisions made by the municipality. As the president of the neighborhood council in *poblacion* La Victoria put it: "La Victoria is known as a fierce *poblacion*, so the municipality has to watch out and be careful about how it treats us."<sup>67</sup>

The tenor of these comments, however, illustrates the complex nature of the relationship between DIDECO and the local organized community: on the one hand it is an authoritative, hierarchical, and at times paternalistic, relationship defined by the attempt to control and manage behavior and the countervailing attempts to resist and struggle. Beneath this formalistic exterior is a latent struggle that is undergirded by tensions based upon perceptions that have been historically influenced, and that is masked by a veneer of cordiality and friendliness.

The relationship between DIDECO social workers and the *pasaje* is shaped and defined, then, by a dialectic of low intensity struggle. DIDECO offices constitute one site of a popular struggle that because of its fragmented and low key aspects, remains largely unnoticed at the center. This struggle itself is Janus-faced: clientelism, friendship, co-optation, and confrontation define the contours of the relationship between DIDECO and community organizations. The hallways and offices of DIDECO and DOC have at times become filled with angry *dirigentes* and residents. The catalyst for these individual

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<sup>66</sup>Lidia and others confirmed this story.

<sup>67</sup>Conversation with Gloria Rodríguez, president of the neighborhood council of *Poblacion La Victoria*.

and collective manifestations of anger vary. A wide range of points of antagonism can provide the trigger for such actions: the attempt to impose garbage collection fees can be the catalyst for a sit-in (*toma*) at DIDECO, the distribution of community development funds can provoke tensions that erupt in screaming matches between DIDECO officials and community leaders, the debate over funding for a primary health care clinic can lead to a *toma* of the clinic, efforts to evict people from their state subsidized homes for not paying their mortgages can provoke fierce resistance (i.e. people barricading themselves in their homes to avoid eviction), the absence of a traffic light at an intersection can lead angry mothers to organize a *toma* of the intersection. In the daily struggle that takes place within the smoke filled labyrinths of DIDECO offices, the terms of a tenuous hegemony that is the cornerstone of state-society relations in the post-transition is renewed and renegotiated.

The close linkages that often develop between DIDECO officials and the *dirigentes* also has an impact on the internal dynamics of grassroots organizations. As the linkages between community leaders and DIDECO have developed, the linkages between organizational leaders and community members have become much more distant, which has in many cases undermined relations between community leaders and the rank-and-file members. This has eroded trust between leaders and rank and file within grassroots organizations (and has been a factor in declining participation). Many organizational leaders, articulating the rhetoric of the municipality, see the rank and file as lazy and unsupportive. A common expression heard from many organizational leaders was that "people want everything handed to them on a platter" (*quieren que se les de todo en bandeja*). Many among the rank and file, by contrast, see organizational leaders as corrupt and serving their own self-interest.

Local governments, then, are endowed with an entire bureaucratic infrastructure--closely linked to the central state--that is designed to manage and coordinate community participation, and to more effectively map the social, political, and economic topography

of the *comuna*. They are gradually being staffed with a plethora of professionals who specialize in the areas of social work, citizen participation, planning, etc. They are also charged with mapping and managing a specific, clearly demarcated territorial/administrative space and its population. DIDECO directors and many of the social workers were generally college educated--generally with degrees in sociology, anthropology or administration--who see the role of DIDECO in terms of managing the organized community. In a very real sense, then, municipalization has had the impact of reorganizing political space and power in ways that "brings government closer to the people."

At the same time, however, participation has been organized and compartmentalized within a space where the techniques of discipline can be used in the attempt to forge a habitus of citizenship. The attempt to build this habitus, however, is fraught with tension and contradiction: DIDECO officials sought to employ the techniques of discipline to shape and mold the practices of citizenship, while *dirigentes* sought to appropriate the discourses that informed these practices and use them to expand the terms of citizenship. From a broader perspective, then, the interactions between *dirigentes* and DIDECO officials can be viewed as part of a struggle over the meaning of civil society, participation, and ultimately citizenship that is constantly taking place.

### **Conclusion: Municipalities, Discipline, and the Panoptic Effect**

Beyond the daily management of municipal-community relations and the co-optation of community leaders, DIDECO is charged with knowing popular organizations, with handling popular organizations, in short, with regulating participation. When these institutions and the territorial space that they encompass are viewed in this light--i.e. from the perspective of social control and the effective management of social demands--municipal governments can be seen as having certain parallels with Foucault's panopticon. The panopticon is an institution that has been fundamental in the transition to modern capitalist society, where power is "exercised continuously and in the subtlest



possible way"<sup>68</sup> and is exercised primarily for productive purposes--i.e. not so much for coercive repression as for discipline. The panopticon is the structural cornerstone upon which the state's role as "educator" is practiced. In the case of DIDECO, techniques of discipline are used to extract from community organizations a form of participation that advances the goals and objectives of community development, and to develop proper habits of citizenship. The spatial redistribution of political space, participation, and contention that the creation of "*la muni*" has been a catalyst for can be understood as an integral part of the techniques of discipline: indeed, for Foucault, one of the basic techniques of discipline is the spatial relocation of individuals.

The panopticon is an "enclosed, segmented space, in which individuals are inserted in a fixed place...in which power is exercised without division..."<sup>69</sup> The map on the wall of the DIDECO in Huechuraba illustrates how the community was viewed from the perspective of the municipality--a vision which parallels that of the panopticon: each neighborhood council and each *dirigente* had a specific, segmented location in the spatial arrangement of the municipality. Moreover, the municipality is itself compartmentalized in ways that spatially distribute individual community leaders.

The municipality itself constitutes an administratively enclosed space that is geographically defined. Within this space, an array of specialists from the municipality, NGOs, and state agencies attempt to organize and manage participation--the PLADECO is but one example. Their thinking is guided by the basic assumptions of the discourse of social participation. This attempt to train people in correct forms of participation can be seen as part of a disciplinary project that is juxtaposed by the attempts of the *dirigentes* to resist such efforts through a variety of strategies. DIDECOs, then, are a space of tension.

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<sup>68</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit. p.208

<sup>69</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit. p.197

The panopticon, furthermore, is suited to implementing transformative (disciplinary) projects that focus on changing human behavior (such as building citizenship and civic cultures through participation): "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. It is...applicable to all establishments whatsoever..."<sup>70</sup> Panoptic institutions serve as the ideal institution for social control, and for arranging power in the service of a productive endeavor--in the case of DIDECO, the objective is to build good citizens and harness the social capital of community organizations in the service of community development. Panoptic institutions are uniquely suited as a surveillance mechanism that ensures that citizens will discipline themselves: "Hence the major effect of the panopticon: to induce in the (individual) a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assure the automatic functioning of power...the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary."<sup>71</sup>

Municipal governments have certainly enabled the state to more efficiently see and read popular communities. They are intimately imbricated within the community and they deal with the community on a daily basis. Indeed, one of the purposes of decentralization and municipalization was to more efficiently target resources to the population. More efficient targeting of resources required that the population be much more accessible and knowable from the center. This has required closer surveillance of the population.

Too, it is important to point out that leaders of grassroots associations also perceive themselves to be more visible, which restrains their range of options. In part, the perception of increased visibility can be attributed to the legacy of the dictatorship, when the regime's security apparatus seemed omnipresent, and when the regime was able to sow a pervasive fear within the *poblaciones*. Nevertheless, municipal governments have

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<sup>70</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit. p.205

<sup>71</sup>Foucault, 1977 op. cit. p.201

added to the perception of visibility and to the perception that participation has an important element of surveillance and education associated with it.

The perception of increased visibility and of “being managed” is reflected in the following conversation that took place among a group of fifteen neighborhood council leaders in Huechuraba who met to weigh the costs and benefits of a organizing a local protest (a sit-in) against the municipality’s attempt to enforce a law imposing building codes and standards on homeowners.<sup>72</sup> The conversation quickly turned from the actual planning of the protest to the more general dynamics of the ongoing tug-of-war that takes place between community leaders and municipal officials on a daily basis.

Margarita: “The mayor will know what we have been talking about by tomorrow, he always finds out about our plans because someone always tells him about things...it seems like they always know what’s going on with the *dirigentes*...we can’t hide anything...this gives the mayor an advantage over the *dirigentes*...”

Lidia: “The mayor has his informants who run to tell him everything that we talk about. If we decide to organize a mobilization, the mayor will tell his *dirigentes* to stay out of it...and they will, and this makes it look like we are just troublemakers who like to make problems. ”

Victor: “The problem is bigger than the municipality finding out what we are up to, the muni treats us like little children...because they try to tell us how to participate, and they are always watching what we do...they think we don’t know and we have to be taught.”

Elizabeth: They (the municipality) try to control us all the time...they try to use the tactic of divide and conquer, and we know it...they may think that we don’t know, but we know...

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<sup>72</sup>This law, known as “la ley del mono” required all homeowners to conform to certain codes. If these were not met, they could be fined. This has not been enforced in most municipalities. However, some municipalities have begun to attempt to enforce these codes, which has sparked anger.

Margarita: It's like we don't have any right to *patalear* (protest) anymore...they want everything organized and quiet, but when people are quiet they don't get anything...during the dictatorship we could protest more than we can now...<sup>73</sup>

In short, as viewed through the eyes of this group of council leaders, the relationship between the municipality and the organized community had a paternalistic, controlling quality associated with it, where the municipality acts much like a guardian over participation. This type of control over participation serves to ritualize participation such that it is no longer an instrument of collective power from below.

Whether the municipality actually found out about the talk of a possible protest beforehand is irrelevant.<sup>74</sup> What matters is that community leaders understood this to be the case, and modified their actions to deal with the perception of increased surveillance. Indeed, an important condition of the panopticon is that it induce the perception of "permanent visibility." It is this perception of permanent visibility that induces the appropriate behavior. That is, there was always the possibility that the municipality (or the state) might be listening and watching--the unverifiable visibility of the panopticon. This perception of increased visibility shapes and constrains the possibilities for collective action.

The type of fragmentation that popular movements have experienced, moreover, is in certain ways consistent with the enframing/compartimentalization of space that is characteristic of panoptic institutions: the spatial arrangement of the panopticon, as Foucault observed, promotes "axial visibility and lateral invisibility."<sup>75</sup> That is, each individual can see (and perhaps interact with) his observer, but cannot see or interact with his comrades because they are separated by a barrier. In Foucault's study the barrier was

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<sup>73</sup>Comments made at a meeting of the union of neighborhood councils in Huechuraba, October 1999.

<sup>74</sup>As it turns out, the mayor did find out, and the next morning moved to sow divisions within the community in order to break the protest.

<sup>75</sup>Foucault, 1977 op. cit. p.200

physical (a wall), and in this case the separations are spatially based administrative divisions and a funding process that serves to atomize and fragment grassroots organizations. Municipalization has had the effect of administratively enframing spaces within which popular organizations act, thus shaping the topography of the politics of pressure and mobilization.

As responsibility for social programs was devolved to the municipalities, popular organizations began focusing their activities at the municipal level. Centering collective action at the municipal level acts as a spatial break on the formation of broader, more coherent, and more centralized popular movements. Municipalities, in short, have been a factor in enhancing the axial gaze of popular movements to the center (in this case the municipal DIDECO), but have concomitantly diminished their lateral vision--i.e. communication and interaction with other movement organizations outside the municipality has diminished.

Because it is a territorially based reorganization of administrative space, decentralization has entailed changes in the daily rhythms of life for the *dirigentes* which has also contributed to the decline of broader popular movements. As a direct result of decentralization, organizational leaders do not travel to the center of the state (i.e. to ministries in downtown Santiago) nearly as much as they used to, which has an impact on the formation of broader movements because it makes encounters between *dirigentes* from different municipalities less frequent and less likely. Movements, it must be kept in mind, are sustained by solidarity and interaction in movement networks. Decentralization has changed these networks.

What implications do the panoptic qualities of the municipality (and the state) have for democratic development? Although they are uniquely suited to the micromanagement of human populations--and thus would seem to have qualities that make them incompatible with democracy--panoptic institutions are not entirely incompatible with democratic forms of government (particularly procedural or Schumpeterian definitions of

democracy, where the role of citizens is to vote and then leave governance to the experts). Bentham, a supporter of the panopticon, argued that because panoptic institutions can themselves be observed by observers, there is little risk that they can degenerate into tyranny. As Foucault, paraphrasing Bentham, describes:

There is no risk, therefore, that the increase of power created by the panoptic machine may degenerate into tyranny; the disciplinary mechanism will be democratically controlled, since it will be constantly accessible to the great tribunal committee of the world.<sup>76</sup>

Foucault, however, saw panoptic institutions as highly undemocratic. However, I believe that panoptic institutions are instrumental to the survival of Schumpeterian polyarchies because they fulfill the task of social control. The panopticon “enables everyone to come and observe any of the observers.”<sup>77</sup> Periodically, officials can be democratically elected to replace those who currently occupy the central spaces in the panopticon. That is, the observers can be changed by the votes of the observed as long as those votes do not lead to the eventual destruction of the panoptic institution (in the Chilean case, such a process is unthinkable because of the clause in the 1980 constitution that makes the military the “guarantor of Chilean institutionality”). There is, in short, the possibility of alternation in power. Power, furthermore, is not vested in the authority of the sovereign, but in the panoptic institution itself. Panoptic institutions, then, are compatible with rational-legal forms of authority that are essential to democratic governance.

The panoptic qualities of government institutions, then, are compatible with minimalist versions of democracy. Despite this compatibility, however, they do create a powerful tendency that Tocqueville and Arendt warned against (and which might explain declining participation): the tendency for democratic institutions to become paternalistic and to attempt to induce uniformity among the population (in this case, the objective has been to create self-reliant citizens that will demand less of the state and the participatory

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<sup>76</sup>Foucault, 1977 op. cit. p.207

<sup>77</sup>Foucault, 1977 op.cit. p.207

ethos associated with the civic culture). Arendt warned of the attempts to “normalize” behavior that came with the rise of mass society--part of which is the panoptic state--and the corrosive impact that this has on the public sphere: “Society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to normalize its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement.”<sup>78</sup> Panoptic institutions--such as municipal governments--are at the forefront of “normalization” through their attempts to induce modifications in mass behavior and political culture. Viewed in this light, the discourse of social participation, I believe, can be seen as an attempt to “normalize” popular participation.

Tocqueville saw power in a democratic state as having the potential to become “absolute, thoughtful of detail, orderly, provident, and gentle,” thus rendering the “exercise of free choice less useful and rarer, restricting the activity of free will within a narrower compass...”<sup>79</sup> Tocqueville and scholars working in the neo-Tocquevillian tradition, however, see decentralized states as a bulwark against such an outcome. Perhaps what these scholars overlooked is the way in which decentralization more efficiently organizes public space in ways that can be used for effective surveillance of the population. Small communities, as opposed to centralizing states, are perhaps more ideally suited for social control.

Municipalities, then, possess Janus-faced characteristics that makes its impact on democratic development ambiguous--on the one hand they have become new sites of popular resistance and of expanded interactions between state and society. Decentralization has created new arenas of participation. On the other hand, municipalities possess panoptic tendencies that can undermine participatory democracy. Often located in the geographic center of the municipality, municipal governments interact

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<sup>78</sup>Arendt, Hanna 1956 *The Human Condition* University of Chicago Press p.40

<sup>79</sup>Tocqueville, Alexis 1988. *Democracy in America* J. P. Mayer (ed.) New York: Harper Perennial p.692

with local community leaders, and seek their participation, while at the same time keeping a watchful eye on them and, as the director of DIDECO in Lo Espejo so aptly put it, attempting to instill in them "correct" forms of participation." Teaching citizenship and correct forms of participation--i.e. the attempt to create a civic culture--can indeed be viewed as a specific form of power that is analogous to Foucault's disciplinary power. DIDECO offices allow for a more efficient surveillance of the community from the center. In many ways they can be seen as outposts of the center. Indeed, community leaders, as pointed out, spend much of their time in DIDECO. While they are obtaining information from the municipality, the municipality is also obtaining valuable information about the community.

Each community leader, moreover, has a specific geographical location--his or her territorial unit (*unidad vecinal*). Territorial units administratively divide the municipal district in a grid pattern, with the municipality at the center of the grid, thus facilitating greater legibility from the center.

The impact of decentralization on the quality of democracy, then, has been ambiguous. Decentralization has certainly increased the points of access that are available to popular organizations. It has also contributed to the emergence of popular figures who are more independent of political parties (as exemplified by Joaquin Lavin, who was seen as someone who can "get things done.") It has also, however, constituted a barrier to the formation of more extensive popular movements. Municipalities have been a key factor in the atomization of popular movements, and to the increasing effectiveness of social control through the micromanagement of popular organizations.



CHAPTER 9  
SELF-CENSORSHIP IN THE *UNION COMUNAL DE JUNTA DE VECINOS DE*  
*HUECHURABA*

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the inner workings of an associational space within the *pasaje* that has been central to popular participation for insights into the impact that structural transformations (neoliberalism, structural adjustment, and decentralization) have had on the dynamics of the public sphere: the neighborhood councils (*junta de vecinos*) and the Union of Neighborhood Councils (*Union Comunal de Juntas de Vecinos*). Meetings of the *Union Comunal* can tell us much about politics in the *pasaje*. The impact of structural and administrative transformations of the state (i.e. decentralization and increasing access at the periphery with greater insulation at the center) has been felt at the interior of grassroots organizations in Huechuraba, and is reflected in the meetings and conversations that take place among leaders of community organizations. These next chapters address the dynamics and the impact of enframing on the public sphere qualities of associations.

In focusing attention on creating social capital and on building harmonious “civic” communities, many scholars who examine processes of democratic transition and consolidation have overlooked the impact that different modes of participation have on the public sphere qualities of associations. Local level participation has had an impact on the public sphere qualities of community associations--it has contributed to a change in the field of vision of community associations. Participation in municipal affairs combined with the insulation of the central government has significantly changed the scope of issues that community associations deal with, and the discursive prism through which issues are

understood. This has had a concomitant impact on the public sphere qualities of associational life.

An organization where the impact of these processes can be seen is the Union of Neighborhood Councils (*Union Comunal de Juntas de Vecino de Huechuraba*). The Union of Neighborhood Councils is a legally recognized federation that brings together all of the leaders (*dirigentes*) of the neighborhood councils in the municipality in one corporately recognized institution. It is also a space that in the wake of the transition, during the democratic moment, became a space for appropriating and radicalizing the democratic language of the *concertacion*. As we saw earlier, the precursor to the *Uniones Comunales*--the *Comandos Comunales* and Democratizing Committees--played an important role in community level democratization in the immediate post-transition and became a space for the emergence of a subaltern counterpublic.

Despite attempts by municipal governments to limit the influence of the councils, they nevertheless continue to remain an important component of the organized community in Huechuraba (and popular sector municipalities in general). In juridical terms, the neighborhood councils are defined as a backbone of associational life and as a key interlocutor between the community and the municipality. Neighborhood councils are strongly represented in the municipality's economic and social council (*Consejo Economico y Social--CESCO*), which mayors must consult on important municipal matters. The social and economic councils are defined as an "organ for municipal consultation that have the objective of ensuring the participation of community organizations" in municipal planning.<sup>1</sup> The CESCOs constitute the corporate representation of the organized community vis a vis the municipality. In creating CESCOs, the goal was to build linkages between the municipality and the different

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<sup>1</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1991 "Los Consejos Economicos y Sociales Comunales Antecedentes y Elementos Para Su Diagnostico e Informe de Un Estudio Evaluativo" Documento Interno de Trabajo No.3 Unpublished Document

corporate actors (territorial associations, economic interests, functional groups) in the community, and to increase community participation in municipal affairs. Thus, despite the municipality's attempts to weaken the councils, they still constitute an important element of the organized community.

The importance of the neighborhood councils can be seen in the structure of membership in the CESCOs, which are determined by law. Forty percent of the members of CESCO must be representatives of neighborhood councils, 30% of the members are representatives of functional community organizations (mother's centers, senior citizens groups, health care committees, sports clubs, etc.), and 30% are representatives of economic interests in the municipality (all organizations in the CESCO must also have legal recognition). CESCOs, however, have no real decisionmaking power, and are merely given the right to render opinions on matters of community development and the municipality's "community development plan" (*Plan de Desarrollo Comunal--PLADECO*), a yearly report on plans for community development. The mayor and the municipal council, however, can choose to ignore the opinions of the CESCO. By definition, however, the *Union Comunal* has a significant political function--to consult with the mayor on issues of municipal planning.

Participation in the community development plan (PLADECO) is one of the main instruments that has been used by municipalities to attempt to stimulate community participation in municipal government. Every year, the municipality of Huechuraba (and most municipalities) invites all community organizations (neighborhood councils, women's and mothers centers, health care groups, senior citizens organizations, etc.) to "participate" in formulating the community development plan. At these encounters, community organizations--neighborhood councils--propose projects and bring problems to the attention of the municipality.

Thus, if any organizational space was endowed with the requisites for constituting itself as a potential site for pressuring the municipality and exerting an influence over municipal policy, and a space for politicized debate, the *Union Comunal de Juntas de Vecinos* would seem to be just such a space. The *Union Comunal* has been one of the associational spaces in popular municipalities that has shown the potential to house a subaltern counterpublic. Since they were first created in the late 1960s, the neighborhood councils and the *Uniones Comunales* have often emerged as a site for organizing community mobilization. The *Union Comunal* is specifically empowered by law to act as the voice of the community on key issues. Thus, the Union would certainly seem to be a space to engage in political discussion and deliberation (i.e. a space for the development of a public sphere/subaltern counterpublic). It would also seem to be an ideal space for cooperation, resistance and legitimation.

The *Union Comunal* is also an institution that brings together many of the key leaders of the organized community with the purpose of interacting with the municipality to discuss issues that concern community development: infrastructure, planning, growth, and social issues. The council leaders who meet at the *Union Comunal* can be seen as a microcosm of the *pasaje* and all of its antinomies and contradictions. Unfolding within the *Union Comunal* is an underlying hegemonic struggle that is a reflection of broader *pasaje* politics and that is rooted in a historic tension that has divided the community: the struggle between a conservative underbelly and a radical antithesis which shapes political identity and culture. While this tension can trace its lineage to the forging of the *pasaje*, it has acquired new dimensions and contours as over time new discourses have been appropriated for use within the community. Meetings of the *Union Comunal* show how these divisions shape the tenor of political discussion among community leaders in Huechuraba and ultimately how it shapes the practice of citizenship in the *pasaje*. The

Union, then, can be seen as a cross section of different orientations and understandings of political involvement and participation.

The understandings of citizenship that manifested themselves in the course of the meetings of the *Union Comunal*, then, are linked to different narratives and discourses that shaped the historical formation of the *pasaje*. Popular political cultures are the product of complex historical processes that articulate conflicts taking place at the macrolevel (i.e. the national) and conflicts that take place in the labyrinth that is the *pasaje*. Nevertheless, it is also true that the collapse of Allende's socialist project and the transformations brought by the dictatorship have also been a watershed that is reflected in the meetings of the *Union Comunal*.

### **Conflicting Visions of Politics and the Role of the Citizen**

I attended several meetings of the *Union Comunal* in Huechuraba (and in several other municipalities) with the objective of gaining insights into how issues were framed. At the first meeting of the *Union Comunal* that I attended, there were thirty three representatives (presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and delegates) of Huechuraba's twenty-two neighborhood councils present. The people at these meetings constituted a core group of Huechuraba's community leadership. The average age of the leaders who were present was forty-three. The youngest person present was 31, while the oldest was 64. There was a more or less even number of men and women, which reflects the entire leadership of Huechuraba's councils: 42 women and 51 men held leadership positions in Huechuraba's neighborhood councils.<sup>2</sup>

Women, however, seemed to be more active in municipal affairs on a daily basis than men. This probably has to do with the fact that most of the male council leaders spent most of their time outside of the *comuna*; they were either employed in the industrial or service sectors of Santiago, or were a part of the informal economy. Many of the

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<sup>2</sup>Catastro de Dirigentes de Juntas de Vecino de la Municipalidad de Huechuraba 1999

women, by contrast, were homemakers. Thus, they spent more time in the *comuna* than did the men, which enabled them to get more involved in municipal affairs. Municipal governments are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on weekdays, precisely the time when most men are away from the *comuna*. During the week, therefore, the public that makes its presence felt in the municipality is made up predominantly of women.

For many women, participation in community organizations was also a form of resistance in the household: they participated to get away from the home. For many women, participation was a form of social activity: "I get distracted from my problems at home...when I come to the *junta*, I can talk to my *comadres*, and forget my problems for awhile."<sup>3</sup> Many women often had to participate in the face of the opposition of their husbands, and thus had to tailor their participation around the rhythms of the household: when the husband was home, they often could not participate because they had to be at home attending to his demands:

My husband doesn't like it when I participate in the *junta de vecinos* and in the *Union Comunal*, so to avoid fighting, I generally participate when he is not home. In the beginning he would get very angry whenever he came home and I was out at the *junta*. Now, he has begun to accept it a little more, but he still gets angry when I am away too much.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, a central element of the conservative underbelly of the *pasaje* pertains to gender and the politics of the home: the interior of the home remains a space that is dominated and controlled by men. As this woman's comments suggest, however, participation in the *junta de vecinos* and the *Union Comunal* has become a vehicle for opening some space at the interior of the home for women.

Many of those who attended the meetings were a part of popular struggles throughout the history of Huechuraba's *pasajes*: the struggle to build the *poblaciones* in the 1960s and early 70s, the struggle against the dictatorship and structural adjustment of

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with treasurer of the neighborhood council of La Pincoya. September, 1999

<sup>4</sup>Interview with *junta* member from La Pincoya, June 2000

the late 70s and early 80s, and the *cabildos comunales* of the late 1980s and early 90s. Most of the leaders of the neighborhood councils had been involved in some form of political activism since the Allende period, some of the older leaders had participated in the struggles to build their communities, while others became active in the struggle against the dictatorship in the 1980s, when the popular movement reemerged. Others had been participants in the *cabildos comunales* during the period immediately following the transition. During coffee breaks, they were eager to tell me the stories of their involvement in the popular struggle during the late 1960s and early 70s, and a decade later against Pinochet. Many remembered these periods with a certain nostalgia. As a group, then, the members of the *Union Comunal* are representative of that generation of activists that shared many common experiences that were crucial in the formation of their political identities. In short, they represent a cross section of the social world that was forged on the *pasajes* of the *poblaciones* of Huechuraba.

The lessons that these leaders would draw from their experiences with popular organization and mobilization, however, differed in several important ways. These lessons have shaped the understandings and practices of collective action and the role of citizens and popular organizations vis a vis government in the post-transition. A clear and decisive majority of those at the meetings of the *Union Comunal* seemed to have come to the conclusion that the basic parameters of the social order were essentially unalterable, and that grassroots participation should not be focused on changing the status quo, but instead should be about participating within the parameters established by the system: "You can't defeat the system", said Raul Ibaceta, "because the military left things tied up (*amarrado*).” Pilar Macaya--a school teacher in one of Huechuraba's schools, and secretary of the neighborhood council of the *poblacion* Simon Bolivar--added that "the military still controls things" from behind the scenes, while her friend Magaly Reyes

pointed out that “the *momios*<sup>5</sup> always win because they have the money and the power.” Magaly then added that “we can’t fight against the system because *we can’t win...it is up to the politicians to change the system*, and the politicians don’t listen.” This last comment underscores a common theme within the post-transition *pasaje*: the felt existence of a vast chasm between the sphere of popular participation and the sphere where systemic level transformations take place. The concerns of many leaders, then, was not with achieving systemic level changes, but with improving the community incrementally and consensually. Magaly’s comment can be read as an acknowledgment that popular participation is not going to change the basic parameters of the social order. Yet another voice from the back of the room chimed in: “Go ahead and protest and you’ll see what happens...the *pacos* (police) will ‘accommodate’<sup>6</sup> you in the back of the *furgon* (police van) and you’ll end up in jail.” This last comment underscores a felt perception of an increased state capacity to exercise surveillance and to bring coercion to bear on the situation. In short, it points to a perception of an increased state capacity for exercising social control. One legacy left behind by the dictatorship is the perception of a much stronger state--i.e. of a state that is much more impervious to pressure. As Magaly put it:

The government isn’t like it used to be before....before, if you screamed and yelled, in most cases you got what you want. Now, they’ll send the *pacos* in after you....look at what happened to the people who did a *toma* in El Bosque...the *pacos* came in and evicted them with clubs.

Magaly’s comment may perhaps be the product of a distorted historical memory, but a common perception--whether true or not--is that the state is no longer as vulnerable to popular pressure as it was before 1973. The state no longer yields to popular pressure, and there will be little tolerance for the politics of mobilization and protest.

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<sup>5</sup>momios is a popular expression used to refer to the bourgeoisie or the wealthy.

<sup>6</sup>In this context, “accommodate” is a euphemism for a beating.



The massive defeat of the national-popular projects of the 1960s and early 70s, followed by the subsequent defeat of popular civil society in the mid and latter 1980s, followed by the defeat of the *cabildos comunales* in the wake of the transition have been the catalysts for a process of political learning that has been reinforced by the actions of the state to reorganize civil society following the transition. The economic and political structures left in place by the regime, and the inability (or unwillingness) of the *concertacion* to make any effort to significantly change these structures, have served to maintain a set of power relationships that contribute to shaping the perception that the broader system is immutable, and that participation should not even attempt to address these issues.

More generally, this group of *dirigentes* conveyed a particular perception of reality where ordinary citizens, working through grassroots organizations, cannot change the fundamental dynamics of the status quo. In other words, people expressing these views seem to have come to terms, albeit somewhat grudgingly, with their role as citizens in post-authoritarian democracy--i.e. as participants in a political system that is ultimately controlled by an alliance of political elites and business leaders, where important decisions are left to those who know, where technocratic consciousness<sup>7</sup> informs decisionmaking, and where the impact of popular participation on policymaking is limited, circumscribed and contained.

It is noteworthy that some of the people that articulated these views had been involved in the protests against the regime in the 1980s, and in the democratic moment of the early 1990s. Pilar and Magaly had both been involved in the *comando comunal* of 1990-91, and had participated in popular organizations in the 1980s. In short, these leaders, many of whom had at one time been participants in many moments of popular

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<sup>7</sup>Habermas, Jurgen 1970 *Towards a Rational Society*. London: Heinemann

mobilization, were now articulating a sense of realism and pragmatism in terms of their ability to act to change the basic parameters of the neoliberal order.

The respect for the capacity of the state to exercise social control and the virtual certainty that any challenge to the system will be defeated also influences the dialogue at Union meetings by constraining the parameters of political discourse and limiting what is expressed at meetings. At these meetings, citizens censored themselves and others at the meetings in ways that supported the status quo. The perception of the immutability of the system, and the certainty that any efforts to change the system will be defeated, then, shapes the conversations of the members of the Union because it led them to think in terms of solutions to immediate and tangible problems, and to ignore the broader institutional and structural problems that give rise to them. A perceived inability to change things led people to stop discussing important questions and dilemmas because it exposed their impotence. It is better to focus on the positive, on those things that can be accomplished. Broader structural inequities are not their within the purview of their organizations. Many of the leaders in the Union rejected the infiltration of political discussions into the arena of participation, and they sought to avoid getting involved in what they called "*politiqueria*" a pejorative term for political discussions.

This group of council leaders has come to see politics--i.e. the discussion of alternative ways of understanding the world and issues that are potential sources of rupture with the status quo--as a corrupt activity that is a waste of time that can only get people in trouble. These *dirigentes* were more receptive to the neo-Tocquevillian discourse of "social participation" being advocated by the *concertacion* because it is a model of participation that is largely divorced from the often troublesome and hazardous world of politics. Social participation is participation without the problematic political baggage. As Raul put it:

All we can do is to take advantage of the spaces that the state makes available for us to participate. Demanding that the state give us things that it

cannot give is useless...it only leads to conflict, and we are tired of conflict.

Thus, the majority of *dirigentes* in the *Union Comunal* were under no illusions about what participation could achieve. This group espoused what could be called a politics of the pragmatic and the tangible: avoid confrontation and work within the system to achieve what is feasible.

In opposition to those who see participation as a means of achieving small, piecemeal, and tangible gains, was a minority of the leaders within the Union, who argued that leadership and participation in grassroots organizations should be about the politics of gradually building counter-hegemonic popular movements from below and about struggling to defend the rights of the popular classes (i.e. the "*pueblo*"--workers, urban and rural poor, lower middle classes): This minority saw the politics of pragmatism and the tangible as fundamentally aimless and as an admission of defeat. As Luzmenia argued: "We have to slowly rebuild a popular movement that can really have relevance and that can defend and demand our rights." Luzmenia, in short, wanted to discuss politics, to confront what she saw as an unjust social reality, and to articulate visions that could provide an alternative to the current neoliberal order. Only by putting these questions on the table, she argued, can people build consciousness and change the system. However, this smaller group acknowledged that this would be an arduous, long term project because it entailed waging a struggle against powerful structural forces that provide formidable obstacles to the rebuilding of popular movements--particularly apathy, fragmentation, and decentralization that all work as obstacles to organizing the *pueblo*.

### **Pragmatists vs. Militants**

This split in the Union between what could be called a group of "pragmatists" and a "militant" group illuminates significant differences in how participation is viewed and understood, and ultimately to how the role of the citizen is understood. That is, "militants" and "pragmatists" had fundamentally different interpretations of their role as citizens.

During the course of interviews with council leaders, I asked forty-four members of the *Union Comunal* in Huechuraba (as well as organizational leaders in four other municipalities) about the objectives of participation in post-authoritarian Chile: “What should be the goal of participation in social organizations?” Responses to this question were varied, but they could be broken down into two distinct clusters. The first four responses can be seen as comprising a “cluster of responses” that are centered around certain common themes--the construction of a politics of non-confrontation, while the latter three form a cluster of responses that shape a politics of contestation and confrontation.

Table 9-1

The Objectives of Participation in Grassroots Organizations

Response Cluster 1 (The Pragmatic View of Participation):

Solve the problems that are facing the community	12	
Build community and help people	9	
Creating spaces to exchange experiences	4	
Working with the municipality to develop the community	6	(N=31)

Response Cluster 2 (The Militant View of Participation):

Create popular consciousness/build movements	7	
Changing the economic and political system	5	
Organizing “ <i>el pueblo</i> ” for popular struggle	1	(N=13)

The first cluster of responses point to a non-confrontational, harmonious vision of participation that is contained within a specific institutional space: the institutional and territorial space of the *comuna*. It is participation that is broadly consistent with the neo-Tocquevillian discourse of social participation--participation that is generally non-confrontational. Participation is viewed through a cooperative, communitarian light: participation should be about building a harmonious, cooperative community. Thus, these responses define both a modality of collective action--i.e. cooperation with public authorities and working together in the community--and a space for action--the community. The pragmatic majority (n=31) sought to work within the community--the

*comuna* of Huechuraba--and work with the municipality to solve concrete and tangible community issues. They placed much less of an emphasis on building links to organizations outside of the community and forging a broader movement. Indeed, they saw participation basically in terms of the municipality. They placed even less emphasis on challenging the system and discussing alternatives to the existing hegemony.

This difference in the way in which participation is understood generally holds for organizational leaders in all five municipalities that I surveyed. If we examine the responses of organizational leaders from five popular sector municipalities, we find that out of a total of 102 leaders that were interviewed, 27% (n=28) gave what could be considered “militant” responses and 73% (n=74) gave “pragmatic” responses. People that gave answers that could be considered militant came predominantly from the left of the political spectrum: the communist party, orthodox (i.e. Allende) socialists, and some members of the newly formed party for democracy (*Partido Por la Democracia--PPD*). By contrast, those who gave answers that could be considered pragmatic were predominantly non-partisan or identified themselves as Christian Democrats or as sympathizers with the independent democratic union--UDI--the right wing party that most closely adheres to Pinochet.

Pragmatists have adopted in large measure the definition of the role of the neighborhood councils advanced by the state and the municipality: they are seen as organizations that should collaborate with the municipality to foster “community development” as defined by political elites. They keep their demands and their actions limited to those areas that the state defines as lying within the purview of community organizations. Thus, at meetings with representatives of the central government, the municipality, and NGOs working with the state, pragmatic organizational leaders were generally non-confrontational and participated by following the lead of these actors. The

questions and issues that they raised did not challenge the status quo. They were, in short, somewhat deferential and respectful of authority.

Pragmatists tended to reject the involvement of political actors--such as political parties and party activists--in their organizations. They saw such outside involvement as a form of political manipulation. They were very wary of political party activists who tried to establish contacts with their council. Local political party organizations in the *comuna*, particularly the Party for Democracy (PPD) and the Christian Democratic Party, periodically attempt to strengthen ties to neighborhood councils by inviting non-partisan council leaders to political party meetings and social events. Pragmatists tended to be deeply suspicious of such efforts, and tended to hold the parties at arms length. A number of pragmatists also tended to see politics as a corrupt activity, reserved only for the voting booth:

Politics is dirty...all one gets by getting involved in politics is trouble. It is better to participate in social organizations that have nothing to do with politics and that worry about the real needs of the people. I do not tolerate politics in my *junta de vecino*..Politics is for when you vote.<sup>8</sup>

The argument that politics is a dirty and corrupt activity is an important part of the legacy of the dictatorship. A central theme throughout the dictatorship was that political activity is corrupt and that politicians have only their own interests at heart. People were admonished to instead focus on concrete and tangible questions. The dictatorship made strenuous efforts to disseminate the discourse of anti-politics in the *pasaje*. Only a few studies, however, have examined the impact of efforts by the dictatorship to organize popular participation and to reshape the culture of the *pasaje*.<sup>9</sup> The widespread perception that politics is a corrupt and potentially dangerous activity is one of the most

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<sup>8</sup>Interview with president of the neighborhood council of Villa Wolf, Huechuraba November 1999

<sup>9</sup>Among the few studies that do examine the impact of the dictatorship's policies on popular culture are: Paley, Julia 2001. *Marketing Democracy Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* Berkeley; University of California Press and Valdes, Teresa and Marisa Weinstein 1993. *Mujeres Que Suenan Las Organizaciones de Pobladoras en Chile 1973-1989* Santiago: FLACSO

fundamental legacies of the dictatorship because it has a significant impact on the public sphere.

Pragmatists also tended to see politics as leading to conflict, which they argued could divide and destroy the community. “We get more done” argued Enoelia, *dirigenta* in the council from Villa Wolf, “when we don’t get involved with politics...people work better together without politics.” Many pragmatists remembered the Allende years as a period of intense conflict and strife that was in large part fueled by politics and politicians:

You see what happens when people got involved with politics? All that did was to lead to conflict in the *poblacion*. Neighbors became like enemies because of their political ideas. Some were UP (*Unidad Popular*) and others were DC (*Christian Democrats*), and others were PN (National Party), and there was too much fighting.

According to this narrative, political conflict had destroyed the community and undermined their vision of the community as a harmonious space. Thus, as a general rule, pragmatists eschewed political discussions in their community organizations, and kept the focus on tangible issues that were directly related to the community. The sense one got from talking to pragmatists was that deep political divisions were lurking just beneath the surface of the *poblaciones*, and that if they were allowed to flourish, they would rear their head and destroy the community. The remedy, then, was to squeeze politics out of the public sphere. Pragmatists generally reserved politics for the private and individualized space of the voting booth. They also tended to make a sharp distinction between social organizations and political activity. They did not see grassroots organizations as political entities, and instead saw associations as a vehicle for addressing immediate and tangible problems that did not have to be politically defined as a problem: the hole in the road, the lack of park benches, the need for street lights. This view of the proper place for “politics,” however, has an impact on the public sphere activities of community organizations.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that in private--i.e. backstage--pragmatist leaders could also at times be highly critical of the neoliberal development model, and of the post-authoritarian political system. That is, they did have a broader vision. They considered the neoliberal model to be in many ways unfair and undemocratic, and they argued that the democracy that took shape from the transition had many defects. Their views on the neoliberal economic model were in many ways consistent with a majority who see the system as unfairly skewed toward "*los de arriba*" (the wealthy) and as exploitative and unfair toward the poor. Yet, despite the existence of these inequities, pragmatists also felt that their organizations had virtually no role to play in changing the existing status quo. Change from below, in short, is difficult to achieve.

The second cluster of responses, by contrast, can be seen as informing a vision of participation that is more directly political in that it seeks to use organizations in a very different manner: participation is viewed as a platform for mobilizing beyond the community to challenge the system in a broader way. This vision of participation is anchored in a class conflict understanding of society. That is, the minority (n=13)--whom I refer to as militants--who saw participation in this light tended to seek to expand participation beyond the space of the municipality and to build class-based popular movements that had a capacity to act at the systemic level to change the fundamental underpinnings of the system. Militants rejected the argument that participation at the local level was sufficient to achieve change. They argued, instead, that it was necessary to build a mass movement in order to change the system. Militants, then, seemed much more anchored in a modernist project that was anchored to a utopian meta-narrative.

Militants also tended to see their relationship with the municipal government in much more adversarial and confrontational terms than pragmatists. The mayor, the municipal councils, and bureaucratic officials were seen as representatives of the current status quo--a status quo that denies the *pobladores* their basic rights--and thus were not to



be trusted. To get anywhere with the municipality, argued Luzmenia, you must be willing to pressure officials and stay on top of them. For militants, the objectives of participation were different than pragmatists. The goal of participation, as Luzmenia put it, should be for "the people" (*el pueblo*) to control the government. Contrary to the pragmatists, militants like Luzmenia are deeply suspicious of the new style of participation that emphasizes "participation without politics." They see the attempt to impose a city manager style of administration (and the technocratic consciousness in which it is embedded) in the municipalities as an attempt to sidestep contentious issues by ignoring them. In their interactions vis a vis the municipality, as we shall see, the militants used subtle forms of pressure to gain access to information and to oversee the activities of municipal officials.

#### **Militants, Pragmatists, and Socioeconomic Status**

Generally speaking, pragmatists tended to be economically somewhat better off than militants. Throughout the 1990s, the expansion and growth of the Chilean economy, coupled with increased spending on social welfare, fueled an increase in the standard of living of many Chileans. Poverty rates fell as many of the urban poor in the *poblaciones* became members of an emerging lower and lower middle class (i.e. working class). The percentage of people living in poverty in Chile fell from 38.6% to 21.7% between 1990 and 1998, while the percentage of people living in extreme poverty fell from 12.9% to 5.6% in the same period. Thus, the number of people living in extreme poverty was cut in half, while the number of people living in poverty was reduced by 44%.<sup>10</sup> Since 1990, many people had managed to acquire their own homes through government subsidized housing programs and through the legalization of old land occupations. Between 1990 and 1999, the ministry of housing and urban development built 911,861 low income public

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<sup>10</sup>Ministerio de Planificacion y Cooperacion 2000 *Evolucion de la Pobreza 1990-1999* Santiago: MIDEPLAN

housing units.<sup>11</sup> Huechuraba's poverty rate fell significantly, from over 50% to less than 30%. Many land claims were also resolved in the early 1990s, which made large numbers of people owners of their own home in Huechuraba.

Pragmatist council leaders tended to come from those sectors of Huechuraba that had benefited the most from the economic boom in the 1990s. They represented neighborhood councils that were located in communities that were comparatively better off than the average community in Huechuraba. As a general rule, the homes of pragmatists seemed to be of better quality, and seemed to be generally better furnished. The income of pragmatist leaders tended to be somewhat higher as well. The average household<sup>12</sup> income for pragmatist community leaders was 267,000 pesos/month, where as for militants, the average was 201,000 pesos per month.

Figure 9-1

	<u>Pragmatist</u>	<u>Militant</u>
Income <250,000 <sup>13</sup>	15	9
>250,000	16	4

This suggests that perhaps pragmatists had more of a stake in the post-transition system and were less willing to engage in confrontational activities. Pragmatists were more likely to see that despite all of its flaws and inequities there were chances to work within the system to achieve concrete objectives. Pragmatists generally felt--despite their disagreements with many important aspects of the neoliberal economic system--that their material situation under democracy had improved:

Figure 9-2

Pragmatists, Militants, and Perceptions of the Economy

		<u>Pragmatist</u>	<u>Militant</u>
Economic Situation	Yes	18	5
Improved Since transition?	No	13	8

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Household income refers to the income of all who were working and who lived in the house.

<sup>13</sup> 250,000 pesos in 2000 was equivalent to approximately 550 US dollars.

In short, it would seem that material questions, and perceptions of the possibilities for future improvements in standards of living are a factor in shaping patterns of participation. Those leaders who felt that their economic situation had improved significantly since the transition were more likely to see participation in pragmatic terms, and they were more likely to give the *concertacion* and the neoliberal model the benefit of the doubt (despite strong reservations). In contrast, those who had not seen significant material improvements were more likely to see participation in more confrontational terms, and to seek more substantive changes. This data, then, provides some support for the argument that increasing affluence tends to lead to moderation in political behavior.<sup>14</sup>

More extensive interviews with council leaders provides additional support for the argument that increasing levels of income leads to political moderation. Pragmatists tended to argue that because many their basic needs--such as housing--had been satisfied, participation should be more oriented to working within the system to fulfill needs of the community: parks, recreational facilities, better city services--such as sewage and water--were high priorities. As Eduardo Flores, one of the leaders of the Union Comunal put it: "Even though there are still many problems, it must be recognized that the *concertacion* has improved things. That is why we have to protect the democracy that we have by supporting it." These collective goods could be acquired by working with the municipality, not by confronting the municipality with ideological rhetoric. Moreover, demands for these types of collective goods is precisely what municipal government is designed to handle best. In short, despite having many profound disagreements with the neoliberal system, the pragmatists felt that it was best to work within the system to achieve tangible goals.

### **Militants, Pragmatists, and Political Parties**

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<sup>14</sup>Lipset, Seymour Martin 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy" *American Political Science Review* 53

In contrast to the pragmatists, militants tended to be much more involved in the activities of their respective political parties, as the following table shows:

Figure 9-3  
Pragmatists, Militants and Membership in Political Parties

		<u>Militants</u>	<u>Pragmatists</u>
Membership in a	Yes	11	14
Political Party?	No	2	16

Militants were also predominantly members of the communist party (PC). By contrast, pragmatists who had membership in a political party were predominantly from the Christian Democratic party (PDC). The following table gives a breakdown of party membership for pragmatists and militants:

Table 9-2

Party Membership of Militants and Pragmatists

<u>Militants</u>	<u>Pragmatists</u>
Communist: 7	Christian Democrat.: 5
Socialist: 3	Socialist: 3
Party for Democracy.: 1	Party for Democracy: 3
	<u>UDI: 3</u>

This table provides further support for the association between party and citizenship practices. Luzmenia, for example, continues to be very loyal to the communist party. She faithfully attended meetings of the communist party in Huechuraba, and was one of the leaders of the party in the *comuna*. She generally spent time every week at the communist party's national headquarters on Ricardo Cumming street in downtown Santiago. Regular attendance at general party meetings allowed Luzmenia to stay in touch with *poblador* leaders from other *comunas*--thus latently sustaining some of the networks that supported METRO and CUP. At the main offices of the communist party, she maintained contact with other members of the *poblador* movement: Claudina Nunez and Gloria Rodriguez from *poblacion La Victoria*, Elizabeth Orrego and Lidia Silva from *Jose Maria Caro and Villa Lo Sierra* and other former key figures in METRO who now

work through communist party organizational structures to maintain linkages with base level organizations in the *poblaciones*. Although it has been inactive since the early 1990s, and it has withered due to lack of financial support, METRO continues to exist in latent form within the communist party's organizational networks. METRO, then, enjoys a relationship of articulation with the PC, where "in return for routine access to the center of party power and institutional support for their cause, movement activists are expected to follow party guidelines and instructions."<sup>15</sup>

Party meetings also served to nurture and sustain a militant political identity, and to engage in polemical debates about issues that for the most part were not discussed in the context of the neighborhood council; the problems of post-transition democracy, neoliberalism and its impact on the poor, strategies for the future, etc. At meetings of the communist party, problems were seen and discussed in broader terms: it could be said that the problem of the "pothole in the road" and the lack of recreational spaces in the community were put into structural terms--they were linked to the limitations of the neoliberal economy. Indeed, communist party meetings that I attended were much more of a space for deliberation and debate than were council meetings, where contentious and politicized issues were sidestepped in an effort to avoid conflicts. For many of the militants, then, their party was a bedrock of culture and identity. The communist party also sustained and nurtured a utopian vision of radical social change that appealed to many militants. She saw her fellow communists as brothers and sisters, and the party as a virtual family. Thus, for many militants there was no greater organizational referent than the party organization.

Luzmenia saw the communist party as a central part of her life, and chastised those who had left the party following the transition. As she put it: "People who have no party

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<sup>15</sup>Hanagan, Michael 1998. "Social Movements Incorporation, Disengagement, and Opportunities--A Long View" *From Contention to Democracy*. Marco C. Giugni, Doug Mcadam, and Charles Tilly (eds.) Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield p.5

have no political identity.” People who were not politically informed by a broader meta-narrative, according to Luzmenia, were essentially rudderless and incapable of changing the status quo:

If people don't have a political identity, how can things change? Participating just to get a pothole in the road fixed is their way of distracting us from the real problems that the *pueblo* faces...poverty, the unequal distribution of the cake, undemocratic government, etc.

Embedded in these comments is a fundamental challenge to the arguments of post-modernists who eschew meta-narratives in favor of localized and fragmented struggles. For Luzmenia, these localized and fragmented struggles in the trenches of municipal government, while achieving tangible benefits, in no way have challenged the dominant model.

Although Luzmenia argues that social organizations--such as neighborhood councils--should not be obedient appendages of political party organizations, she argued that the ideals and vision of the party should provide a guide for action within social organizations. For Luzmenia, the communist party provided a blueprint for social transformation that social organizations should strive to work toward. Without this utopian blueprint, social organizations were essentially rudderless entities whose sole purpose was to chase after state emoluments. Indeed, if the purpose of social organizations is consciousness raising and building popular power, Luzmenia argued, party organizations are important because parties give people a broader vision of political issues. She points out that the communist party “opened her eyes to how the system works.” In her rhetoric, then, Luzmenia and many of the militants tended to have more of a “party loyalist” relationship to their political parties: “Party loyalists believe that the key to politics and any possibility of social transformation lies with the strength of their parties.”<sup>16</sup> For Luzmenia, social transformation comes about when political parties of the

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<sup>16</sup>Hite, Katherine 2000. When the Romance Ended Leaders of the Chilean Left, 1968-1998 Columbia

left work together with social organizations to build a class based social movement that can challenge the system through collective action. That is, she argues that grassroots organizations should be closely connected with political parties of the left in order to press for change.

The type of relationship pragmatists had with their parties differed significantly from militants. While militants tended to be socially and culturally embedded within their respective parties, the relationship pragmatists had with parties was much more distant. Although many pragmatists had a party preference and were either members (*militantes*) or sympathizers (*simpatizantes*) of a party, the fact that they had membership in a political party was much less central to their lives and their identity than was the case with the militants. Their linkages to political party networks tended to be more fluid, and their identification with a party as a collectivity tended to be much less intense. They did not attend party meetings as frequently as the militants, and their participation in party activities did not build serve to sustain social movement networks. For pragmatists, political parties played more of a programmatic role in their lives: parties organized their thinking about issues, and they guided their behavior in the voting booth, but they did not generally play a major role in shaping their social and cultural identity.

Indeed, party activists in the municipalities often complained about the attitude of the pragmatists vis a vis the parties. They tended to see the more programmatic, distant nature of the relationship that pragmatists had with their party as a form of disloyalty and as an absence of party discipline. Party activists argued that one of the reasons for the marginalization of community associations and grassroots movements was their disarticulation from political parties since the transition. Leaders and activists in the parties, however, tended to view the relationship between associational leaders and party leaders in hierarchical terms with party organizations in an authoritative position over

grassroots movements. Council leaders rejected this, arguing instead for a balanced relationship between parties and grassroots associations.

### **Pragmatists and Militants in the *Union Comunal***

Differences between militants and pragmatists constituted a fundamental division in the *Union Comunal* that shaped the dynamics of interaction and discussion. Pragmatists and militants confronted each other in the *Union Comunal* in a struggle for communal hegemony. While pragmatists were more willing to establish cooperative alliances with the municipality--and to overlook deeper sources of conflict--militants argued for a more contentious and confrontational relationship. Many of the pragmatists--i.e. those who view participation in a cooperative, harmonious light--tended to see Luzmenia and the more militant participants in the Union as potential troublemakers. Although they respected her and her fellow militants for their tenaciousness and her willingness to "take it to the streets", they argued that such actions are generally doomed to failure. Thus, pragmatists had an ambivalent and contradictory relationship with the militants: on one hand, they saw them as troublemakers, and on the other they admired their willingness to challenge authority. They remember the crucial role played by people like Luzmenia in the efforts to organize the community and struggle against the dictatorship, yet they saw little room for such actions in the post-authoritarian setting. As Eduardo Flores, the vice president of the *Union Comunal* and the informal leader and spokesman for the pragmatists, told me privately after the meeting: "

Even though she is a communist, I like Luzmenia and get along well with her, but for her everything is about politics and fighting. She likes to stir up the chicken coop and fight, and most of the time that doesn't get anyone anywhere....some people never learn that the system really can't be changed by pobladores."

Eduardo advocated working within the system to achieve more modest objectives that were more realistic.



Luzmenia, on the other hand, complained that meetings of the Union of Neighborhood Councils had become too narrowly focused on technical issues, and that not enough time was being devoted to political discussions and debates or to raising consciousness and building a popular movement: "The majority of the people in the *Union Comunal* don't want to talk about politics and whenever the discussion gets politicized, they whine and complain that we're not going to get anything done...and that we are becoming too political." In short, Luzmenia was complaining about the absence of public sphere activities--deliberation, open-ended debate and public minded conversation--in the *Union Comunal*. Instead, participants tended to narrow the scope of their conversations. In particular, the pragmatists acted to keep politics off the agenda.

By virtue of constituting a fairly substantial majority, the pragmatists were able to enforce a kind of "self-censorship" of the dialogue at the meetings of the Union. That is, they acted in ways that tended to restrict the scope of debates and conversations at meetings of the *Union Comunal*. Thus, the pragmatists colonized the space of the *Union Comunal* and acted in ways that limited and constrained the scope of political discussions. Over time, this pattern of self-censorship had evolved into a style of public engagement and dialogue at the meetings of the *Union Comunal*. Meetings of the *Union Comunal* have become embedded in a civic etiquette that eschews broader debates in favor of a focus on achieving tangible objectives. Instead of discussing broader structural issues, meetings focused on narrow and concrete questions, such as community development projects. This pattern of interaction, however, has also meant that many potentially contentious issues go undiscussed and are carefully sidestepped at Union meetings. Deeper conflicts were simply not discussed openly. When these questions were brought up, many simply wanted to sweep such issues under the carpet.

Indeed, for the most part, Luzmenia has been unable to use the *Union* (or her own neighborhood council) as a forum to "build popular consciousness" and to mobilize the

community for sustained collective action against the municipality or the state. Rarely was Luzmenia or any of the other militants in the *Union Comunal* ever able to turn the Union into a forum for building popular consciousness. Whenever Luzmenia and the militants tried to steer discussions in a direction that could be seen as having the potential for building consciousness or that used the language of confrontation and mobilization, the pragmatist majority tended to turn a deaf ear.

One of the meetings of the *Union Comunal* that I attended revolved around the issue of the upcoming meeting with the mayor to decide on the distribution of the annual community development fund (*FONDEVE*). Every year, by law, municipalities must distribute the *FONDEVE*--*Fondo de Desarrollo Vecinal*--to neighborhood councils for projects in their communities. The community development fund was created in 1995 as part of an effort to promote the model of social participation, and to strengthen community organizations by building the technical and organizational capabilities (*capacidad de gestion*) of community organizations and community leaders (*dirigentes*).<sup>17</sup> Funding for the *FONDEVE* comes in part from direct grants provided by the central government through the Common Municipal Fund (*Fondo Comun Municipal*), and in part from municipal funds raised from fees and licenses. These funds are used for various types of neighborhood development projects: community beautification, building sports facilities, for needed infrastructure, etc. The bulk of *FONDEVE* funds in metropolitan Santiago (around 35%) in previous years have been used to build community centers in the *poblaciones*.<sup>18</sup> Neighborhood councils present project ideas to the municipal council, and the municipalities--i.e. a group of technical "experts" in the municipality decide which projects to approve. These technical experts are comprised of urban planners in SECPLAC, the department responsible for planning and DIDECO--the department of

<sup>17</sup>Division de Organizaciones Sociales 1995. "Instalacion en el Municipio del Programa Fondo de Desarrollo Vecinal FONDEVE" Internal Document of the Division de Organizaciones Sociales

<sup>18</sup>Sepulveda, Victor 1996. "La Experiencia del Programa FONDEVE" Municipalidad de Conchali

community development--who often work with NGOs and academic institutions to determine the feasibility of projects. Thus, although community organizations formulate project ideas and present them to the municipal council, experts from the municipality have an oversight role. Luzmenia saw municipal oversight of the *FONDEVE* projects as another example of the thinly veiled attempts to control community organizations and short-circuit the creation of a genuine popular power from below:

The municipality treats the *dirigentes* like children. They feel that we can't be trusted, and they are afraid that we might take power away from them. They have to control things so that the *pueblo* doesn't gain too much power and demand too many things.

This oversight function of the municipality (exercised primarily through DIDECO/SECPLAC) was deeply humiliating to Luzmenia because she felt that it indicated how the *pobladores* must be supervised and cannot be trusted.

Because of the economic recession and cuts in the budget, this year's *FONDEVE* would be considerably smaller than the previous year. This was a source of anger and resentment among the members of the *Union Comunal*. Among the membership, however, there were two distinct interpretations of the reasons why there would be a smaller *FONDEVE* this year. Luzmenia and the more militant faction in the *Union Comunal* contextualized and framed the problem by arguing that the neoliberal system is responsible for the paltry *FONDEVE* and for many of the other problems that were facing Huechuraba's communities. That is, she framed the problem as a problem of the structural inequities of capitalism, and of the ability of powerful actors to control tax and spending policies:

The reason that there is no money for the *FONDEVE* this year is that the rich don't pay their fair share in taxes, and the government has no money. The government can't make them pay more because they are controlled by *los de arriba*.

For Luzmenia and the militants in the *Union*, the *FONDEVE* is simply a symptom of a broader problem that ultimately is rooted in a power structure that works against the poor

and the working class (the *pueblo*). Luzmenia, in short, saw the post-transition state in much the same way as Marx saw it: as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie. She blamed those socialists who have compromised their basic values to adopt the basic principles of neoliberalism for the situation. The militants in the Union argued that only by rebuilding a broad based popular movement would the "*pueblo*" be able to effectively project their demands: "Our situation won't change until the people (*el pueblo*) organize to tell the government that they won't take it anymore...people now are letting themselves get runover by the system and that is why we must organize" argued Veronica, another of the militants present that night at the meeting of the Union.

However, Eduardo Flores quickly recentered the discussion by pointing that there was nothing that could be done about the system and the recession, and that instead of fighting about what cannot be changed, the meeting should focus on reaching agreement about how the funds should be distributed:

We all know the reasons that there is no money for the FONDEVE, but what do we get by complaining? It won't change things, so we should decide what we want to do with the FONDEVE, instead of fighting over why there is so little...we don't have time to be fighting.

The pragmatist faction voiced their agreement with statements of support for Gustavo's point: "What do we get by thinking about the reasons why things are the way they are, it won't solve anything..." argued Marianela from the back of the room. It was more important, then, to accomplish something than sit around squabbling over the injustices of the system. Thus, although pragmatists were acutely aware of the inequities of the system, they saw little role for their organizations in changing these things. Since they had no role to play, it did not make sense to waste time discussing these issues.

Thus, there seemed to be a general consensus among the members of the *Union Comunal* that the problem of the lack of adequate community development funds can be ultimately attributed to an economic and political system that is skewed toward the

wealthy. To the majority of the members of the *Union Comunal* the argument that the economic and political system are skewed toward the wealthy was simply a basic reality and not very noteworthy. Indeed, this perception of the unfairness of the current system is pervasive in popular communities. Where there was no firm consensus, however, was on the role that citizens play in changing that situation, whether they did have any role in changing that situation, or whether they could change the system even if they wanted to do so.

Finally, Eduardo also added that “we all know what happens when people go beyond the limits of what is acceptable.” Eduardo’s last comment points to the lingering fear of engaging in collective action and of articulating voice in ways that are unacceptable to elites in power. Indeed, a common underlying theme that was pervasive throughout the comments of these leaders was a sense that democracy is somehow tenuous and conditional, granted as a privilege for appropriate behavior, and which can be taken away if people misbehave. As Eduardo put it: “The *milicos* still have things under control...if people ask for too much, we might end up with a dictatorship again.”

Thus, there is an imperative to censor discourse and control political behavior in the name of protecting and consolidating the advances that have already been made. A song written in 1989 by *Sol y Lluvia*, a popular group of the left that challenged the regime with their music, captures the dynamic tension between silence and voice:

<i>Tengo un diablo en mi corazon,</i>	I have a demon in my heart
<i>que me quiere hacer callar,</i>	that wants to shut me up
<i>Tengo un diablo en mi corazon,</i>	I have a demon in my heart
<i>que me quiere hacer callar...</i>	that wants to shut me up...
<i>es el temor, es el temor,</i>	it is the fear, it is the fear
<i>es el temor, es el temor,</i>	it is the fear, it is the fear
<i>pero mi pueblo me quita el silencio</i>	but my <i>pueblo</i> removes the silence
<i>y me devuelve la voz</i>	and gives me back my voice...

Through the emergence of the *pueblo*, in other words, fear is overcome and voice is articulated. Only through the emergence of the *pueblo* as a collectivity, do people--*los de*

*abajo*--have voice. At the same time, in the absence of the *pueblo*, which provides the courage to act, the demon emerges telling people that it is best to be silent.

Eduardo's comments seemed to bring an air of "reality" back to a discussion that was beginning to become politicized and that was beginning to expose more fundamental cracks that lurked beneath the surface veneer of civic participation. The reality is that their organizations were not protagonists, but recipients of decisions made in highly insulated circles, in institutional arenas that to many seemed distant and inaccessible. The pragmatist majority saw themselves as essentially powerless to change the dynamics of the broader political structures, despite the fact that they agreed that those structures were unfair and inequitable. Paradoxically, however, the majority also shared a consensus on the importance of popular participation. Despite the limitations, the majority felt that their organizations could still accomplish things for the community by working within the system (despite a consensus that the system works against them). In short, they seemed to accept the constraints on participation in the post-authoritarian environment in the belief that participation can accomplish modest changes.

A debate over Christmas toys during a coffee break reveals the same dynamic at work. Every year, the municipalities have distributed Christmas toys for the children in poor municipalities. However due to the recession, the municipality of Huechuraba was not going to be able to distribute toys. This became a source of anger and indignation among the members of the Union because the distribution of toys had come to be seen as a right. Luzmenia argued that many *pobladores* would not have gifts to give to their children on Christmas. One woman argued that the mayor probably used the money for something else, and then lied to the municipality: "They're all corrupt, and they don't care about the *pobladores*...they probably took the money and shared it with their friends" she argued, placing the blame on corruption and political favoritism within the municipality.

Elizabeth, another one of the militants, told this woman not to blame the mayor, and to see the real source of the problem:

*Comadre*, we shouldn't have to be begging the mayor for toys for our children. If things were really fair, we could go out and get our own toys. The reason that we don't have toys is because we are poor, and the reason that we are poor is because of the neoliberal system that distributes the cake unfairly.

For Elizabeth, the culprit can be found in the economic structures of neoliberal capitalism. Views such as this are articulated in casual conversations. Rarely does the topic of socioeconomic inequality and its causes become a formal issue on the Union's agenda. Instead, when poverty becomes an issue, it is discussed by the majority (the realists) as an unavoidable fact of society. At formal meetings of the Union, discussions are restrained and limited to the parameters of what is acceptable. Thus, when Elizabeth pointed this out, from across the room Raul retorted: "So...since you are so tough, what are you going to do about that?" Elizabeth had no answer and remained silent, exposing the dilemma of the militants--the lack of a realistic alternative to the current hegemony. Looking at me, she shrugged her shoulders and asked, "what can we do?"

### **Power, Hegemony and the *Union Comunal***

The ability to define issues and propose alternatives is crucial in democratic politics. Eliasoph has written that "without the power to determine what sorts of questions are worth discussing in public, citizens are deprived of an important power, the power to define what is worthy of public debate, what is important, what is good and right, and what is just natural."<sup>19</sup> A puzzling question is how the broader grievances of community leaders in Huechuraba had been so effectively processed out of the discussion so that by the time demands reached the municipality, they were formulated in the language of the dominant. Many of the community leaders that were present had been in

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<sup>19</sup>Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* Cambridge University Press p.18

the trenches of the popular struggle during the late 60s, early 70s, and early 80s. Furthermore, even the pragmatists agreed that many aspects of neoliberalism were unfair: the health care system, the gap between the rich and the poor, etc. How were these grievances transformed and in other cases squelched, so as to perpetuate the smooth functioning of the system?

In the *Union Comunal*, the majority--i.e. the pragmatists--actively worked to keep conflict laden issues of the agenda or to reframe them in the language of "community development" and to focus on demands that could be satisfied through the municipality. That is, issues were discussed in the context of the politics of the pragmatic and the feasible. They turned a deaf ear to the arguments of the militants, despite sharing many of their grievances. The militants, in short, were silenced.

The tug of war between pragmatists and militants in the *Union Comunal* in Huechuraba, I believe, sheds light on the dynamics of hegemony and power. In his analysis of power, Foucault has enjoined us to reject interpretations of power that are centered around macrostructures and on coercion and repression. Instead, he argues for a more decentered understanding of power that is dispersed, localized, heteromorphous, and productive--and that shapes the subject in toto. Power relations begin in individual schools, in individual barracks, and individual Churches. The dynamics of the meetings of the *Union Comunal* support much of Foucault's argument: the pragmatist majority wielded and adopted the dominant language to squelch and filter out potentially destabilizing counterdiscourses (or subjugated knowledges). The building blocks of hegemony are negotiated at the community level in the small, localized space of the *Union Comunal*, located on the *pasaje* and far removed from the macrostructures of power. There are countless spaces like the *Union Comunal* where such processes are constantly unfolding.



Foucault, however, has also been criticized for not linking these localized spaces to the state: "Foucault does not explain how disciplinary powers do come to be utilized, stabilized, and reproduced in state structures or other generalized mechanisms."<sup>20</sup> The meetings of the *Union Comunal* suggest a more nuanced approach where power works at the intersection of macrostructures (the state and the municipality) and localized spaces (the *pasaje*). It was the state that structured many of these fragmented spaces within which such struggles for communal hegemony took place. Indeed, it was the state that created the administrative subdivision that gave birth to the *comuna* of Huechuraba. The administrative divisions of the municipality serve to enframe and compartmentalize the *pasaje* and its associational spaces.

The dominant discourse of social participation articulated to the conservative undercurrent within the *pasaje*, probably because social participation is organized, harmonious, and non-conflictual participation, which is appealing to this conservative undercurrent:

I participate like a civilized person, not like a *roto* who goes into the municipality with bad manners demanding things like Lidia and some of the other *dirigentes*. One has to go and ask for things in a civilized way... doing things like *tomas* is not right, it is not something that decent people should do.<sup>21</sup>

Social participation, with its emphasis on dialogue and its rejection of confrontational forms of participation, and with its discourse of community harmony, partnerships between the state, the municipality, and community organizations appeals to this undercurrent.

This conservative thread that is woven into the tapestry of the *pasaje* forms what could be called the fundamental building block of an emerging culture of political

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<sup>20</sup>Mitchell, Timothy 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect" *State/Culture State-Formation After the Cultural Turn* George Steinmetz (editor) Ithaca: Cornell University Press p.87

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Irma Otarola, president of a neighborhood council in the municipality of Lo Espejo March 2000.

avoidance--it resonates well with those who enjoin people to practice a particular form of polite citizenship (i.e. a form of civic etiquette) that defines the contentious politics of mobilizations and protest as uncivilized, undemocratic, and barbaric. The argument that politics is corrupt and leads only to conflict is part of a broader narrative that has been central in the formation of *pasaje* political culture, and that has a long historical trajectory. This understanding is embedded in a broader discourse concerning appropriate political behavior that serves to narrow the scope of acceptable political behavior. The state in Chile, acting through institutions like schools and other public agencies has historically been at the forefront of teaching that "the position of social movements vis a vis the state is not one of popular sovereignty, but instead is that of supplicant petitioner."<sup>22</sup> Thus, the dictatorship's discourse of order found a fertile undercurrent with which to articulate.

Cultures of political avoidance, however, are also constructed through an active process of communication and dialogue.<sup>23</sup> A powerful set of obstacles operated at the meetings of Huechuraba's Union of Neighborhood Councils to encourage people to avoid political debate and skirt around thorny questions that could lead to political confrontation. The sense of powerlessness and of the limited impact that popular organizations--generated largely through macrolevel structures--has an important impact on the tenor of discussions that take place at the meetings of the *Union Comunal*. Too, while hegemony is an ongoing process that unfolds in localized spaces, the sense of powerlessness that informed the behavior of the pragmatists was the result of an intersection of macro and micro factors: first, the historical undercurrent of conservatism and deference that has been a part of the political culture of the *pasaje* since its creation. This conservative undercurrent has been forged over time in localized spaces (some of

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<sup>22</sup>Salazar, Gabriel and Juio Pinto 1999. *Historia Contemporanea de Chile Estado, Legitimidad, Ciudadanía* Santiago: LOM Ediciones

<sup>23</sup>Eliasoph, 1998. op. cit.

which have macrolevel referents): the home, the church, the schools, and in the myriad of social interactions that take place on the *pasaje*.

First, there seemed to be a genuine desire to avoid conflict--a strong aversion to conflict--both within the Union and vis a vis municipal and state authorities. As Marta, one of the "realists" within the Union, put it:

We all have our political identities and ideologies, but here the meetings are about getting things done for the community, and politics will only lead to fights and conflict. It is bad to mix politics and religion in the business of the *Union Comunal* because it leads to fights and disorder.

Participation had to mesh with the imperative of order. Engaging with politics would only be a distraction that would get in the way of getting things done. It would also be an obstacle to developing a sense of community because it would require potentially heated debate and expose potentially deep fissures in the community. Conflict, then, could threaten the delicate harmony of community. Conflict was associated with disorder, and disorder could lead to negative consequences (the potential use of force to crush dissent, for example). The traumatic memory of the Allende years and the coup that followed has taught a powerful lesson: conflict in the community can have life threatening consequences. Thus, in an effort to achieve a workable "consensus" within the community and to preserve harmony in the community, many issues were kept off the Union's agenda and defined as outside the scope of the Union's concerns. Potentially contentious issues were relegated to the backstage, where people sniped at each and discussed their resentments in circles of close and trusted "*companeros*" or "*comadres*."

A second reason for the absence of discussion is that people did not want to discuss or contemplate what they felt that they could not influence because it would expose the ineffectiveness of the Union, and underscore the fundamental powerlessness of the organization. Structural inequities and the fairness of the neoliberal system--which were of concern to all the members--such as the manner in which society allocates goods

and services, seemed to be beyond the purview of the neighborhood councils. That is a part of reality that, according to the realists, popular organizations are not capable of changing. The Union's members, instead, focused on what could realistically be accomplished given the situation: gaining access to those resources that were available from the municipality, and formulating opinions concerning the municipality's development plans. However, in the process of narrowing their concerns to what is realistically achievable, a "culture of political avoidance"<sup>24</sup> would seem to be in the process of being erected in Huechuraba.

In order to filter potentially troublesome issues out of the meetings, the members of the *Union Comunal* for the most part bracketed out of the discussion trenchant social issues, such as inequality, poverty, and marginalization, and discussed issues in a way that the structural context in which they unfolded was divorced from the issue itself. The discussions also focused on tangible and local issues: the *FONDEVE*, the mayor's plan for community development, exchanging information concerning which municipal officials are more pliable, Christmas toys for the children of the municipality, etc. Contextual issues--such as structural inequities and poverty--lurked just below the surface of discussions, and at times proved difficult to avoid. When such issues became unavoidable, the context was ignored and problems were personalized as the fault of one individual--the mayor, the head of planning, the director of community development, etc.

This self-restraint and enforcement of self-censorship by the pragmatists within the *Union Comunal* constitutes a victory for the system of domination because it leaves out of the discussion precisely those issues and questions that are the building blocks of the system of inequality: those structures and mechanisms that skew the system in favor of the wealthy, and that are at the root of many social inequalities. It also precludes the development of alternative visions of the social order. Too, it illustrates the dynamics and

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<sup>24</sup>Eliasoph, op.cit. 1998

operation of two types of power: (1) what Gaventa has called the third dimension of power. Power in the third dimension, argued Gaventa, "influences, shapes, or determines conceptions of the necessities, possibilities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict."<sup>25</sup> Squelching discussions of conflict laden social issues are a first step in managing situations of latent conflict because this precludes the organization of counter-hegemony. Power, in this sense, has the capacity to relegate certain goals and objectives to the realm of an unattainable utopia. Civil society, then, does much of the heavy lifting for the status quo by filtering out more contentious issues before they even become formulated as a problem. Indeed, the "bracketing of social inequalities in deliberation...does not foster participatory parity. On the contrary such bracketing usually works to the advantage of the dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates."<sup>26</sup> These realities are filtered out of the conversation because they are deemed to be unsolvable. There are currently no viable and compelling models to counter "growth with equity"--which is in reality an attempt to put a human face on neoliberalism.

The effect of the civic etiquette that has developed within the Union, and in the relations between the municipality and the Union, has served to reconfigure the very spaces where alternative realities are conceptualized and formulated, and turn them into spaces where hegemony--albeit a tense and often uneasy hegemony--is sustained. This does not mean that opposition does not exist--indeed, all of the members of the *union comunal* saw the system as unfair and inequitable. It means that within the *Union Comunal* criticisms that make it into the broader public arena--i.e. that come to the attention of the municipality--are formulated from within the discursive framework of hegemony, which supports the status quo instead of challenging it. Attempts to develop

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<sup>25</sup>Gaventa, John 1980. *Power and Powerlessness Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* Urbana: University of Illinois Press p.15

<sup>26</sup>Fraser, Nancy 1997. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Craig Calhoun (editor) MIT Press p.120

critiques that fall outside of the acceptable parameters are squelched by the realists before they become viable.

What is remarkable is that meetings of the *Union Comunal* seemed to be taking place largely outside of the glare of powerholders, where presumably subaltern actors would be free to elaborate their own alternatives. However, after the meeting, one of the members told me that people had to watch what they said at meetings because the mayor had her "snitches" within the group, who would tell her the next day about what was discussed, and what was being planned.<sup>27</sup> When I asked him who these "snitches" were, he said he could not say for sure but that he had his suspicions. In short, there was no shelter from the reach of the powerholders. Along with the memory of the Pinochet years, this created a sense of permanent visibility that constrained public debate.

Within the *Union Comunal*, then, the dynamics of power also operated in a Foucaultian sense by penetrating social space to produce "self-surveilling" subjects that restrained themselves as well as any potentially unruly peers. This has made the task of social control considerably easier, and it shapes popular participation in ways that harness the social capital that is developed by participating in support for the system. Instead of challenging the structures of domination, participants actually bolster it.

What impact does the dynamics of self censorship of discourse have on popular movements and democratic governance? If we conceptualize movements from below emerging from within the organizational interstices and networks within popular civil society, then one of the stages in the creation of social movements is the formulation of an alternative conceptualization of the world that becomes crystallized through discussions and deliberation. These alternative conceptualizations are generally developed in the context of subaltern counterpublics. In the case of Chile, subaltern counterpublics have

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<sup>27</sup> Whether this was true or not is irrelevant, although this is a comment that I heard from many community leaders in different municipalities. Nevertheless, it illustrates the extent to which there is a sense that there is no escape from the power structures that have been created.

traditionally emerged within an associational incubators of the *pasaje*: neighborhood councils, soup kitchens, women's centers, homeless committees, health care groups--in short, popular grassroots organizations that because they are dedicated to confronting subsistence and consumption issues must confront structural realities. Popular movements have generally emerged as a result of a discursive connection of problems faced in everyday life with the broader structures that comprise the framework of society.

However, at the meetings of the Union of Neighborhood Councils, the majority made a deliberate effort to avoid dealing with those issues, and to thwart the militants in the group from doing so in any sustained way. As a result, one of the most essential ingredients of counter-hegemony is censored out of the discourse by the pressure of the majority: a collective action frame that assigns blame for a particular situation and that can serve as the basis for an insurgent collective identity (despite the fact that the grievances for such a frame do exist).

## CHAPTER 10

### THE CONTRADICTIONS OF BUILDING THE CIVIC COMMUNITY: ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN MUNICIPALITY AND COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

Extensive contacts and in many cases close linkages between municipal officials (elected officials, bureaucrats, and social workers) and grassroots community organizational leaders have become a staple feature of the movement toward administrative decentralization and democratization in Latin America.<sup>1</sup> In Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, and elsewhere, significant efforts have been made to make local governments a focal point of popular participation and the exercise of citizenship.<sup>2</sup> In Chile, a cornerstone of policies to develop the institutional capabilities of municipal governments has been to “transfer to municipalities the capacities that will permit the realization of activities in conjunction with the community and residents” and to aid in the development of “associational life in the community.”<sup>3</sup> Developing close linkages to base level organizations is seen as an essential element in institution building and in the forging of the practice of citizenship. Going by a variety of names--Participatory Budgeting, Participatory Planning, Community Planning, etc.--projects designed to ostensibly give citizens a greater role in local government have created a new space for popular participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Grindle, Merilee S. 2000. *Audacious Reforms Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* See also Pereira, Luis Carlos Bresser and Nuria Cunill Grau (eds.) 1998. *Lo Público No Estatal en la Reforma del Estado* Buenos Aires: CLAD

<sup>3</sup> Ministerio del Interior Subsecretaría de Desarrollo Regional y Administrativo 1999. *Construyendo Juntos el Nuevo Municipio Programa de Fortalecimiento Municipal* Santiago: SUBDERE



These institutional spaces have also become a cornerstone of what Scott<sup>4</sup> has called the public transcript--the constellation of observable, public relations between dominant and subordinate groups. The public transcript of neo-liberal, post-dictatorship democracy plays an important and dynamic role in the construction and maintenance of hegemony. Indeed, it is where hegemony is tended to on an almost daily basis. One question, then, that must be examined is the impact that the emergence of this new dimension of the public transcript (i.e. municipal-community relations) has had on the development of a subaltern public sphere. What role have these emerging arenas played in shaping an autonomous civil society and a subaltern public sphere? With an eye toward answering this question, this chapter examines the dynamics of the public transcript through the prism of formal meetings between municipal officials and grassroots community leaders.

Although the primary mode of contact between municipal government officials and the organized community has been the dyadic encounter between municipal officials, social workers and individual organizational leaders in the offices of DIDECO, municipal governments also routinely sponsor and organize meetings between community associations and municipal officials--generally from DIDECO and the department of planning (SECPLAC). According to municipal officials, these regular meetings have two primary objectives: first, to solicit the opinion of community leaders on local issues, mainly on questions concerning community development. Mayors and elected officials saw these "town hall" style meetings as a chance to interact with community leaders in order to gain a better understanding of the demands of the community. They also saw it as a chance to build linkages to the community. Building linkages with organizational leaders in the community was also important for electoral purposes. During elections, council and other

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<sup>4</sup>Scott, James C. 1990. Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts New Haven: Yale University Press

organizational leaders can often wield significant influence and shape public opinion in the *pasaje*. Respected community leaders can help to mobilize the vote in their sector of the *comuna*, and can mean the difference between winning and losing a close election.

A second (and for our purposes, more important) objective, however, was to attempt to aid in the development of a civic community and to inculcate and encourage certain styles of citizen participation--in effect, to teach participation and responsible forms of citizenship. In establishing and sponsoring these participatory spaces, then, interactions between the municipality and representatives of the organized community were seen by municipal officials as a chance to put into practice a neo-Tocquevillian model of social participation. Municipal officials from the office of community development (DIDECO) saw these organized encounters with citizens as a way of teaching organizational leaders how to participate in post-transition democracy and more broadly, how a democracy works. As the subdirector of DIDECO in Huechuraba put it:

Here the *dirigentes* get an opportunity to work with the municipal government and to learn how to participate in democracy. They learn how to work with the authorities of the municipality to improve the community and to exercise their rights as citizens.<sup>5</sup>

Encounters between municipal officials and the organized community were seen by DIDECO officials as a forum for encouraging certain styles and modes of popular participation (and, concomitantly, for excluding and delegitimizing other forms of participation). These spaces were also seen as the essence of democracy in the post-authoritarian period. Indeed, even the interior decor of DIDECO featured a democratic motif: a poster on the wall enumerated new laws protecting citizens' rights (*derechos ciudadanos*), calendars supplied by FOSIS conveyed the message of a government that was close to and working for the citizen. In every detail, then DIDECO was purposely designed to convey a sense of "government for the people."

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with Subdirector of Community Development for Huechuraba October 1999

By contrast, some of the leaders (*dirigentes*) who had participated in these meetings, and who had developed extensive contacts with the municipality, were deeply disillusioned with post-transition participation, and with local level participation. While many *dirigentes* agreed that the municipality did indeed facilitate citizen access and popular participation, they also argued that participation within the municipality had become a tool for managing and manipulating participation. This disillusion is reflected in a document assessing the state of local participation that the leadership of the Union wrote in 1999. In October of 1999, leaders of the *Union Comunal* met to discuss the problems associated and dilemmas associated with popular participation in post-authoritarian Chile. These concerns were articulated in a document that was written for presentation at the 1999 conference of the Continental Federation of Community Organizations that was to be held in Santiago in November of 1999. The evaluation of popular participation that is contained in this document is instructive because it reflects a particular understanding of the municipality that contradicts many of the Tocquevillian assumptions concerning the democratizing effects of local participation. The central conclusion of this document is that as it is currently structured and practiced, local level participation is essentially a tool for social control:

Municipalities in Chile do not have the autonomy or the resources needed to carry out their functions as participatory spaces. As a result, municipalities have become containment barriers that limit the demands of the community...In practice, Chilean municipalities maintain the doctrine of the dictator-ship--divide in order to govern and control participation more easily.<sup>6</sup>

In the municipality of Huechuraba, the report goes on to argue, “*there is no such thing as real participation.*” Similar concerns were echoed at the conference by the leadership of the *Union Comunal* of Cerro Navia, Pudahuel, Lo Espejo, and Lo Prado.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Union Comunal de Juntas de Vecinos Huechuraba “Reforma Política y Participación Ciudadana” Document submitted at a meeting of the Metropolitan Federation of Neighborhood Councils (FEMUC) Unpublished Document November 1999

<sup>7</sup>Interviews with the presidents of the Union Comunal of Cerro Navia, Pudahuel, and Lo Espejo revealed similar concerns: participation at the local level has become an effective tool for social control.

Decentralization and participation in the municipality, then, were seen by the leaderships of the *Uniones Comunes* of these communities in often contradictory terms, as both a facilitator of state-society relations *and* as an effective tool of social control. As these leaders saw it, instead of being a harbinger of citizen participation, decentralization had become the cornerstone of a strategy of "divide and conquer." This reading challenges the neo-Tocquevillian thesis that decentralization is a vehicle for expanding democracy and the role of the citizen in governance.<sup>8</sup>

What factors explain this jaundiced reading of local level participation? Part of the answer to this question can be found by examining these arenas from a "public sphere" perspective. While decentralization may have indeed brought government closer to people, created more points of access for popular participation, and made the delivery of targeted social services more effective, it has also served as the midwife to a particular mode of participation--the "civic-volunteer" mode of participation--that takes place within the broader overarching framework of a discourse of social participation. The civic-volunteer mode of participation depoliticizes, enframes, and compartmentalizes participation in ways that tend to perpetuate the status quo and to keep contentious political issues off the agenda.

Among the objectives of meetings between municipality and community was to increase popular participation, build legitimacy, foment an interest in municipal affairs. The goal, in short, was to "bring government closer to the people," a slogan that has become a familiar refrain of the *concertacion* in the past decade. The internal dynamics of these routine encounters between the municipality and the organized community, however, ended up reinforcing the perception that the status quo is somehow unalterable,

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<sup>8</sup>Diamond, Larry 1999. *Developing Democracy Toward Consolidation* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Fox, Jonathan 1994. "Latin America's Emerging Local Politics" *Journal of Democracy* 5,2;; Grindle, Merilee S. 2000. *Audacious Reforms Institutional Invention and Democracy in Latin America* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba 1989. *The Civic Culture Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* Newbury Park: Sage

and that the fundamental parameters of the social order cannot be changed. The conversations at these meetings served to keep contentious issues off the agenda in favor of a narrow focus of deciding how to spend a limited amount of funds that had been earmarked for neighborhood development projects. This outcome was achieved by defining participation and the role of community organizations (i.e. civil society) in ways that sharply circumscribed the practices of citizenship. From another perspective, then, this mode of participation was politically disempowering, and did little to address some of the more basic concerns of the participants. At these meetings, it was the municipal officials that set the agenda of the meetings and framed the discussions. By setting and shaping the public agenda, the municipality helped to define what is realistic and what is not realistic. Municipal officials also subtly framed the language in which it was possible to speak about issues. In this way, participatory spaces are the midwife to the development a public sphere whose salient features are its narrowness and a marked absence of political discussions and debates.

Without discussion of political issues, however, an analysis and understanding of the political world becomes extremely difficult. In the absence of political discussions, the political sphere (where the most important decisions about social organization are made) has come to be seen as a distant, alien, corrupt, and potentially dangerous world that is best left alone. One council leader's answer, when I asked her about national government, illustrates this perception of the political sphere as an unintelligible world and suggests a cycle in which an absence of political discussion leads to a growing distance between the political sphere and the community and to a growing sense of alienation and to a dulling of citizenship:

What do I know about what the politicians do? What can poor people like us do? They know what is going on, and we don't, so when they tell us something, we have to have faith in them because we can't understand. It is better to leave the politics to the politicians because they know better...One who is

poor and doesn't have much understanding (*criterio*) cannot really know. Politics is too confusing...it is best not to talk about such things.<sup>9</sup>

Considering that these words were uttered by the leader of a neighborhood council, these comments seemed paradoxical: because they deal with the municipality on an almost daily basis, it would not be unreasonable to expect council leaders to be generally more informed about politics. The fact that this statement was made by a member of the leadership of a neighborhood council only serves to underscore the disarticulation of the political sphere from associational life that has been occurring in the post-authoritarian period.

Nevertheless, there was also a small cluster of council leaders who sought to engage in more open ended political debates and to expand the scope of deliberations at meetings. It was these leaders--i.e. the militants--who were most influential in writing the report on participation that was developed for the 1999 conference. It was primarily among those community leaders that were affiliated with political parties, particularly parties of the left (the communist party, more orthodox factions of the socialist party, and the PPD), that politicized discussions and a broader analysis of social problems and issues could be found. Council leaders who were affiliated with the communist party or those who identified themselves as orthodox or "Allende" socialists (in contrast to renewed socialists) generally were among the most vocal and critical members of the *Union Comunal*. They were least willing to participate in ways that "leave decisions to those who know" and were most likely to analyze issues in a broader context.

By contrast, those who were not affiliated with any political parties and who held the parties at arms length (such as the council leader who made the above statement) tended to limit the scope of their discussions and deliberations to the parameters of social participation and to disarticulate local issues from a more global analysis. In practical terms, they tended to center their gaze upon "*los proyectos*," the community development

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<sup>9</sup>Interview with neighborhood council leader in Huechuraba, June 2000

projects that were made available by the municipality through FOSIS and other state agencies. Meetings that were led by such council leaders were generally held for specific, tangible purposes: either to petition the municipality to fix a particular problem or to discuss a particular community development project for which they were eligible. By contrast, meetings that were led by militants in many cases became more politicized and far reaching. Like meetings that were led by pragmatists most meetings organized by militant leaders were ostensibly organized with a specific purpose, they often would branch out into broader areas that dealt with the basic rights of citizenship. More so than the space created by grassroots organizations, then, it would seem that political parties have had an important public sphere effect that despite the decline of parties in the post-transition, continues to encourage a more critical and analytical style of citizenship.

The public sphere effect that affiliation with political parties (particularly those of the left) can have is better understood by examining the relationship between party affiliation or identification, participation in organizations, and the willingness of people to accept the versions of reality put forth by elites and to defer to government officials on important decisions. An indicator of a person's willingness to uncritically accept the definition of reality put forth by elites or to defer to the judgment of elites in the making of important decisions can be inferred from responses to the following statement: "Certain people are more qualified to make important decisions and to govern this country because they are more educated and have better traditions."

Table 10-1

Educated Should Make Decisions?

Strongly Disagree	9.7% (97)
Disagree	15.5% (155)
Agree	52.2% (523)
<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>22.7% (227)</u> (N=1002)

People agreeing with this statement, it can be argued, are more likely to defer to elites on important issues and to leave political questions to "those who know." Agreement with

this statement, then, is incompatible with citizenship in a democracy, and is unlikely to contribute to the development of a vibrant subaltern counterpublic. Disagreement with this statement, by contrast, suggests that people would probably be more willing to analyze issues from a more critical perspective and to challenge elite versions of reality. At the very least, they would be more willing to question information given to them by government officials.

Table 1 shows that fully 75% of respondents agreed with the proposition that those who are better educated and who have "better traditions" are better qualified to make important decisions, while only 25% disagreed. Responses to this statement were then crosstabulated with data on party membership (i.e. whether a respondent is a member of a political party) and party identification (i.e. which party the respondent most identifies with). The results of the cross tabulation suggest that there is a relationship between party identification and affiliation and the willingness of people to let elites make the decisions and construct reality.

Figure 10-1  
Party Membership and Perceptions of the Role of the Citizen

		Party Membership		
		None	Sympathizer	Militant
Educated are best qualified	Agree	79%	68%	62%
	Disagree	21%	32%	38%
		N=705	N=168	N=128

Figure 10-2  
Party Identification and Perceptions of the Role of the Citizen

		Party Identification <sup>10</sup>			
		None	PC/PS	PDC/PPD	RN/UDI
Educated are best qualified.	Agree	82%	60%	73%	80%
	Disagree	18%	40%	27%	20%
		N=447	N=227	N=221	N=107

<sup>10</sup>Party identification does not imply membership in the political party, it simply means that people most identify with the positions of these parties. The question was "If you had to identify with the values of any political party, which would it be?"



Taken together, the results of these two tables suggest two things: (1) those who are active members (militants) of a political party are less willing to defer to elites on important issues. (2) Second, those who identified themselves with political parties of the left (PC and more orthodox PS) were significantly less likely than other leaders affiliated with political parties to express a willingness to defer to elites or educated officials on the assumption that they were better prepared to make decisions as a result of better education or social status. Those who had no party affiliation or identification or who identified with parties of the right were more willing to leave decisionmaking up to elites because presumably they were more educated and had a clearer understanding of things.

By contrast, a crosstabulation of the relationship between participation in community organizations--neighborhood councils, mother's centers, etc.--reveals that participation in such organizations does not seem to have any significant public sphere effects. The following table is a crosstabulation of participation in grassroots organizations and views on whether the educated are best qualified to make decisions.

Figure 10-3  
Participation in Organizations and Perceptions of the Role of the Citizen

		<u>Participation In Organizations</u>		
		<u>Never</u>	<u>Occasional</u>	<u>Frequent</u>
Educated are best qualified.	Agree	77%	71%	71%
	Disagree	23%	29%	29%
		N=645	N=207	N=150

It would seem, then, that in comparison to political parties, grassroots community organizations in the post-transition have done relatively little in the way of contributing to the development of a critical citizenship skills and a subaltern public sphere. Moreover, a substantial majority of people who claimed to participate in grassroots organizations (71%) expressed a willingness to defer to elites on important matters.

### **Building a Civic Etiquette: The Community Development Plan**

Why has participation in grassroots organizations not led to the development of a more robust subaltern counterpublic? In order to understand why participation in

community organizations and local governments does not seem to have had a significant public sphere effect, it is important to look at the public transcript and the way that municipal officials used these spaces as a basis for negotiating the terms of a hegemony that is embedded in a participatory and democratic discourse. Broader debate and discussion of important issues was discouraged: participation in meetings vis a vis the municipality instead centered around a set of technical questions that were addressed from within the narrow parameters of community development, defined in terms of how to distribute community development funds that were earmarked for distribution to Huechuraba's community organizations. In the context of these spaces, it was only possible to speak about certain specific problems and only in certain terms, leaving a whole range of questions and grievances unaddressed (fundamental grievances that are often at the core of popular discontent). The underlying subtext of these encounters, moreover, was that citizenship is limited to certain areas of governance. In a myriad of ways, municipal officials attempted to enframe and compartmentalize the parameters of acceptable discussion and to subtly limit the scope of participation at these meetings.

Organized encounters between municipal officials and community leaders, then, created a social space within which a civic etiquette<sup>11</sup>--unwritten codes that establish a routinized pattern of interaction and that frame the parameters of dialogue between municipality and the community--was forged. This civic etiquette placed a premium on containing discussions within the parameters of neoliberal consensus, and on politeness, civility, and deference to municipal officials that often concealed and obscured simmering antagonisms between community leaders and municipal officials. This civic etiquette, as I found out, could be very disarming: the morning before the meeting, one council leader angrily told me that he planned to be very tough in his questioning of DIDECO and

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<sup>11</sup>Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* Cambridge University Press p.21

SECPLAC officials concerning the issue of continued funding for the unemployment works program that had been established to help people during the recession. Yet, during the meeting, he was polite and deferential, and his grievances were never publicly aired. The civic etiquette that structured the public transcript on many occasions defused potential conflicts before they entered the public arena. The dynamics of municipal-community relations, then, allowed municipal officials to control and manage the public stage, to colonize, contextualize and define issues, and to create the public appearance of a consensus that was based not on effacing, but on containing and managing differences. That is, what we are talking about here is a reorganization and rearticulation of differences and grievances, and the spaces within which such grievances are aired, such that they are framed and can be addressed within the language of neo-liberal consensus. The issues discussed were framed as tangible, local issues, and were not linked to broader political dilemmas that can be potential sources of conflict and that are outside the bounds of the post-authoritarian “neoliberal consensus”.

The dynamics of the relationship between the municipality and the organized community, then, reveal why many community leaders--particularly the more militant *dirigentes*--despite supporting decentralization in principle have come to view local participation with such a jaded eye. Luzmenia invited me to attend several meetings of the annual community development plan--*Plan de Desarrollo Comunal* (PLADECO)--in Huechuraba (I also attended several of these meetings in two other municipalities: Lo Espejo and Pudahuel). Since the transition, there have been several efforts to foster local level participation and to build the linkages between community organizations and municipal governments with the goal of developing the capacity of municipalities and community organizations for self-government. Among these efforts has been an attempt to involve local communities in formulating community development plans. The

PLADECOs are representative of the efforts that have been made by municipal governments (supported by the state and international organizations)<sup>12</sup> to foster increased dialogue and interaction between municipal officials and communities with the goal of enhancing local governance. PLADECOs provide us with an example of the dynamics of the relationship between the municipality and the community and with insights into the process through which a civic etiquette is forged. They illustrate how citizen participation is operationalized and they allow us to explore the dynamics of the relationship between local government and the organized community.

PLADECO meetings took place periodically in several locations around the *comuna*: the municipality, the Huechuraba women's center, a neighborhood council center, or a public school. Organized with the purpose of discussing issues concerning community development, the dynamics of these meetings illustrate how "participation" is carefully ritualized, managed and defined by social workers from the Department of Community Development (*DIDECO*) to attempt to produce a specific form of participation and a model of citizenship that is depoliticizing and that narrows and constrains the scope of public debate. PLADECOs, then, provide a concrete example of how the discourse of social participation can be understood as an extension of the techniques of discipline to the field of citizenship. During the PLADECO, participation was reorganized by breaking it down into its constituent elements and rearranging it in ways that do not threaten the dominant order. Thus, if decentralization has served to territorially and administratively enframe and compartmentalize popular civil society, the participatory arenas that were organized within these spaces constituted the core of the process where the practices of citizenship were shaped.

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<sup>12</sup> Among the international organizations supporting such efforts is the Inter-American Development Bank, which has provided funds to the Ministry of the Interior for programs to strengthen municipal government. See Ministerio del Interior Subsecretaría de Desarrollo Regional y Administrativo Programa de Fortalecimiento Municipal 1999 *Construyendo Juntos el Nuevo Municipio Programa de Fortalecimiento Municipal* Santiago: Subsecretaría de Desarrollo Regional y Administrativo

One of the most important characteristics of these meetings is that the issues that would be decided in the context of the PLADECO had little to do with the overall development of Huechuraba or with the broader problems facing the community. Indeed, what came under the heading of "community development" was in reality a very small part of the overall process of developing a plan for community development. Instead, PLADECO meetings were held in order to decide how to spend a relatively small part of the municipal budget: those funds that had already been allocated to support projects that were designed by community organizations with the help of NGOs and other actors in civil society--more substantive community planning in reality took place in more insulated meetings between the mayor, the municipal council, and technocratic planners in SECPLAC (the department of planning), and in meetings with representatives of the Subdirectorate of Regional Development of the Ministry of the Interior. Municipal officials--approaching community development from a technocratic planning perspective--viewed participation in terms of accomplishing concrete and clear objectives.

Most of the broader (and in the end more decisive) questions concerning community development were being decided by forces much more powerful than the neighborhood councils and the social workers at the municipality--they were being decided by large businesses that saw Huechuraba as an ideal area for the location of many of their industries, by globalization and downsizing, by policies made in the insulated labyrinths of the state or the corporate boardroom. Peugeot--the French automobile manufacturer, for example, had recently moved its main operations center to Huechuraba. Other industries, such as Cerveza Crystal, the Chilean beer conglomerate, were also contemplating a move to Huechuraba. There are other industries that are planning to move their operations to Huechuraba. The municipality is intimately involved in this process of attracting industries to the area. Municipal administrators welcomed these businesses because it is seen as a sign of progress and modernity, and because it would expand the resource base of the municipality. SECPLAC--the municipal office of

planning--had a map on its wall that charted its plan to turn Huechuraba into an industrial center. Unemployment in Huechuraba (and other low income municipalities) has been increasing. Luzmenia's husband, for example, recently lost his job as a mold maker (*matricero*) in a factory, and now has become part of the informal economy--the army of street vendors that sells items on buses and on the streets of downtown Santiago in order to put food on the table. Decisions about these issues, however, are made largely in the absence of community organizations. In any event, for the most part municipal governments have relatively little capacity to challenge these processes because in many instances they are not legally empowered to do so.

Neighborhood council leaders, however, were concerned about these issues. Community leaders were concerned about the increases in unemployment because it affected many of them directly. They worried that people would have no way to feed their families. They were also worried about the ongoing privatization of state services and how this would affect them. Private companies, as one of the leaders informed me, are not as forgiving as state owned companies. They were also concerned with the problem of the arrived in their homes, and how cuts in government spending would affect the situation. Some of the leaders saw their *poblaciones* under siege by the growing encroachment of industries, and worried that industries would crowd them out of the community. Pilar Magaly worried about possible pollution and the effect that this would have on her *poblacion*. Magdalena and Raul worried about the future of their homes, as Huechuraba became a center for industry. Would industries eventually crowd out the homes of the *pobladores* of Huechuraba? Would this mean that people would eventually have to move? At several of the meetings of the *Union Comunal*, the issue of industrial encroachment in the municipality had been discussed. The tone of these discussions was one of concern. Community leaders, in short, were worried about the future of Huechuraba as industries relocated to the area.

At the PLADECO meetings, however, these issues and concerns never even came up. Instead, a dynamic of discursive enframing prevailed as the purpose of the PLADECO quickly became evident: to decide how to spend approximately 200,000 US\$ in funds that were available to spend on community projects. The director of DIDECO informed the *dirigentes* who were present at the meeting that the objective of the PLADECO was for citizens to participate in deciding how to spend community development funds:

You know that every year, the municipality distributes community development funds, and it is up to the citizens of the *comuna* to democratically decide how to spend these funds. At this meeting we will begin to make decisions on how to use community development funds to benefit Huechuraba.

Thus, from the very beginning of the meeting, the purpose of the “dialogue” between the municipality and the organized community had been narrowed and the parameters of acceptable discussion and conversation had been established by the representatives of DIDECO. Instead of being an open-ended discussion about the future of the *comuna*, then, parameters were established that ensured that many issues that concerned the *dirigentes* would remain off the table. Narrowing the discussions and deliberations at the meeting down to a technocratic discussion of how to spend 200,000 dollars in community development funds left a whole range of potentially contentious issues unexplored in the public sphere and off the agenda.

One of the municipal representatives stood up in front of the assembled *dirigentes* at the meeting added that “we are now living in a democracy, and the citizens of the community have a right to decide issues that concern the development of Huechuraba.” In practice, then, the “right” to participate in community development issues meant deciding how to spend a relatively small sum of money that was already allocated for community development projects by technocratic planners in more insulated locations in the municipal and state apparatus. This, then, was the role of community organizations--to decide how to spend a sum of money that was allocated to the municipality through the state’s municipal development fund. The amount of funds that were available for spending on

community projects was not negotiable. This question had been decided in the ministry of the interior's office of regional development and in the ministry of planning in spaces that were insulated from direct popular participation by community leaders.

From the beginning of the PLADECO meetings, then, the role of citizens was not to engage municipal officials in public minded and politicized debate about the future of Huechuraba, or to challenge the municipality's basic policies in any substantive way. Instead, their role was to decide relatively narrow, technical issues that often had little to do with the broader concerns of community leaders and activists. In practical terms, the question that would be decided by community leaders is whether community development funds should be spent on park beautification, on traffic lights, or on refurbishing community centers. These were, in effect, the questions that were posed to the participants. Deciding this narrow set of questions was their role as citizens.

The PLADECO, then, is one of the spaces within the public transcript where the municipality encouraged and fomented a "volunteer-civic" style of citizen participation which, as Gramsci<sup>13</sup> observed, is the hegemonic image of good citizenship in liberal democracies. One of the primary impacts of this civic etiquette was to encourage community leaders to focus on achieving tangible objectives and to eschew potentially divisive and contentious political discussions because such discussions were seen as an obstacle to getting things done. This also, however, meant that discontent with fundamental aspects of the status quo was effectively squelched by removing such concerns from the public agenda. Such styles of participation also truncated the development of a subaltern public sphere and discouraged citizens from a broader analysis of political problems.

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<sup>13</sup>Gramsci, Antonio 1971 Selections From the Prison Notebooks Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.) New York International Publishers



Nevertheless, there are advantages to focusing on piecemeal objectives: seen from another perspective, focusing on "getting things done" and eschewing political discussion is empowering because tangible things are indeed accomplished--a new community center is built, a plaza is refurbished, or a new sports facility is built. These projects provide visible support for the municipality's argument that if only citizens organized and worked with the municipality, with the NGOs in the community, and with state agencies such as FOSIS, everyone would be better off. People develop a feeling of what Almond and Verba call "civic competence"--the sense that by working together with people, citizens can have a tangible influence over government policies.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Almond and Verba suggested that local government may be propitious for the development of citizenship by acting as a "training ground for civic competence."<sup>15</sup> The achievement of tangible objectives, while sidestepping potentially divisive and conflict-laden political issues, can be empowering to organizations because it creates the sense that things are getting done and generates a perception that participation produces results.

Such a participatory etiquette, however, can lead to the crystallization of a style of participation characterized by what Eliasoph has called a "culture of political avoidance," where people participate in ways that avoid politicized and potentially conflictual discussions in favor of achieving tangible and feasible goals.<sup>16</sup> Participants develop a sense that they have achieved a measure of influence and success vis a vis the municipality *to a significant extent because they have steered clear of getting bogged down in political discussions and deliberations*. That is, success in obtaining access to community development funds (i.e. which can be seen as an indicator of influence in municipal affairs) becomes associated with maintaining a safe distance from the machinations of politics, where the rewards of participation are less certain. Thus, a sense of civic competence is

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<sup>14</sup>Almond and Verba, 1989

<sup>15</sup>*ibid.* p.145

<sup>16</sup>Eliasoph, 1998 *op.cit.*

fostered while--somewhat paradoxically--the public sphere is circumscribed and mechanisms of domination are deepened.

Indeed, one council leader, in pointing to a newly completed "*multicancha*" (a multi-use sports facility that contains a basketball court and a minisoccer field) in her community, gave expression to these sentiments when I asked her about her political affiliation:

No, I have no political loyalties...it is bad to get involved in politics...as you can see, when you participate without politics you get things done for the community. All one gets with politics is discussion, fighting, and wasting time...The only time I get involved in politics is when I vote because voting is the law. Why should I get involved in politics?...We get more done without politics.<sup>17</sup>

She then went on to sharply criticize leaders like Luzmenia and other militant activists who are "too politicized" and who "create too much conflict." The point that she was making, then, was that attaining tangible improvements in the community did not require involvement in politics. To the contrary, sidestepping political debates is a *sine qua non* of community development. Instead, such questions are best left to those who know about these problems (the policymakers). In her view improvements in the community since the transition are to a large extent the outcome of participating in ways that stayed away from politics and that focused on realistic objectives. When I then asked her about the extent of her organization's influence within the municipality, she pointed to the children that were playing on the *multicancha* that morning as evidence that her *junta de vecinos* had considerable influence in the municipality and that, despite its flaws (such as a lack of resources), the municipality listened to people who knew how to organize and participate. In short, a sense of efficacy had been fostered while constructing a culture of political avoidance.

When council leaders were asked the question of what participation in their organizations had accomplished, many pointed to a newly refurbished community center,

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<sup>17</sup>Interview with a neighborhood council leader in Huechuraba. October 2000

to a basketball court, to new street lights, or the pavement of a road as tangible evidence of the accomplishments of the organization. Many council leaders, then, had come to measure the success of their organizations in terms of their ability to gain access to community development funds. Thus, while imbuing in participants a sense that "we are getting things done," political discussions that can provide the basis for the development of critical citizenship skills are squelched in favor of pursuing the feasible within the rules for citizenship in a neoliberal polyarchy.

Furthermore, this emerging habitus of municipal-community relations provides municipal officials with tangible evidence of accomplishments that they can point to during election cycles. There is a whole world of symbolism that lurks beneath "*los proyectos*" (community development projects). When a new community center was built in the *poblacion* Jose Maria Caro in the municipality of Lo Espejo, representatives of the municipality, FOSIS, and NGOs that had contributed funds to the project showed up and cut the ribbon dedicating the new center. The mayor and the representatives of FOSIS made speeches, in which they lauded the role played by the citizens who participated to bring the community center to the *poblacion*. The group of council leaders who took the time to fill out the project proposals--i.e. who volunteered their time and energy by making the trips to the municipality and to FOSIS in order to make the community center a reality--were presented as the epitome of good citizenship: a person who works for the community out of a sense of civic pride, and who can cooperate with fellow community members and municipal government to achieve tangible and demonstrable goals (i.e. to create horizontal networks of civic cooperation and build social capital) that do not diverge from the hegemonic consensus. The women of the neighborhood council who volunteered their time and energy were given a citizenship award by the mayor. Their pictures appeared in the municipal bulletin and in the offices of DIDECO. A large sign outside the center continually reminded passers by that the community center was made possible by FOSIS, the municipality, and the hard work of the citizens of the community.

Following the speeches, there was a party with wine, *empanadas*, and a band that played the traditional Chilean *cueca*, where the whole *poblacion* was invited to see and use their new community center. The mayor--a Christian Democrat--spoke to the *pobladores* and told them that the community center shows that despite the lack of resources of the municipality, by working together with the municipality and the government, people could make real improvements in their community. The community center, he argued, showed what could be achieved through democratic government and through the volunteerism of good citizens. The community center was tangible evidence that the municipality was working for its constituents. In short, what was being conveyed through the use of the symbols of the community center coupled with the speeches was an imaginary of the good (i.e. "civic") citizen and a definition of appropriate forms of participation. Implicitly, too, this understanding of good citizenship also meant steering clear of politics in favor of participation that stayed within the confines of the status quo. As the director of DIDECO put it:

This community center wasn't built by politics (*politiqueria*), it was built because these women worked with the municipality and FOSIS to make it a reality...this is what FOSIS and the *muni* are all about...working together to make a better community.<sup>18</sup>

When seen from another perspective, however, such participation can be disempowering because it defines participation in a way that truncates and limits the "public sphere dimension" of participation, and because it sharply circumscribes the role of citizens in real government policymaking. The civic etiquette that has is emerging and taking shape at these meetings constrains the role played by community organizations in policymaking not by the overt act of exclusion, but through a form of inclusion that centered participation around a core set of activities, while distancing citizens from potentially divisive issues. Political discussions and debates can serve to expose the

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<sup>18</sup>Interview with the Director of DIDECO in the Municipality of Lo Espejo May, 2000

relative impotence of organizations by underscoring the tremendous obstacles to achieving change. Social workers enframed the arena of participation in a way that steered away from political discussion, and away from the latent conflicts that continue to fester beneath what seemed to be the smooth surface of the current social order. Instead, the emphasis was on achieving tangible objectives that, while positive and beneficial in their own right, did not fundamentally address the grievances of the community.

In discouraging political conversations, the civic volunteer mode of participation removed local issues from the broader context in which they are embedded, and turned them into narrowly defined technocratic issues that can serve to depoliticize and ritualize participation. The broader structural forces that are transforming the community--such as the increasing penetration of consumerism, the rising level of indebtedness, increasing unemployment, the growing gap between rich and poor, the increasing privatization of state functions and the rights of citizens, or the expansion of industries into the area--are not subjects for discussion and are subtly processed out of the public sphere because they are seen as unalterable realities that popular participation is not licensed or equipped to deal with.

The dynamics of meetings between municipal officials and *dirigentes* also illustrates how nodal points within the public transcript can become spaces in which techniques of discipline are operationalized. These techniques render participants more visible and legible to the municipality and break participation down into a series of steps which have become a standard blueprint for reorganizing and teaching participation.

The PLADECO began with a video that was produced by the municipality which showed how the community has changed since the transition to democracy: roads have been paved (over 90% of the *comuna* has paved roads), electric lighting is now common in most communities, and water service has been provided to almost all residents. The video highlighted the role played by the organized community in fostering community development and in assisting the municipality in getting these things done, and made

mention of the community development projects that have recently been completed. Citizens were also told that their voice counted and that by working together with the municipal government, Huechuraba could be a better place for all residents. Thus, the idea of community that was painted by the video was a community of consensus and unity, where citizens cooperate with and work with the municipality to achieve common objectives. Huechuraba also publishes a monthly informational bulletin in which the role played by community organizations is also prominently highlighted. In short, the message of the video and community publications was that things in Huechuraba have gotten better since 1990, and that the participation of the community in this process has been essential.

An implicit subtext of the municipality's discourse--which mirrors the discourse of social participation--was that only through a cooperative relationship between the community and municipal government would progress and development be possible. Community organizations were pictured as a source of support for municipal government, and the relationship between community and municipality was portrayed in terms of a broad based consensus. The video attempted, in sum, to present an image of Huechuraba as a harmonious civic community of "like minded equals" who shared common objectives.

The narrative of the harmonious, civic minded community that was presented by the municipality, however, obscured many conflicts and antagonisms that simmered beneath the surface by presenting a hegemonic image of the role of community associations. Indeed, it did not discuss, for example, the poverty and misery of those who were living in the *campamentos* in the mountainous foothills on the edge of the *comuna*, and who were unrecognized by the municipality because they were not a corporately recognized community. Since the inception of the *campamento*, the municipality has been waging an active campaign to have the *campamento* eradicated. Leaders of the organizations in the *campamento* were not invited to attend the PLADECO because they are not recognized as a legitimate member of the *comuna*. Municipal officials, Luzmenia would later tell me, used the existence of the *campamento* as a political tool in their

strategy of “divide and conquer” vis a vis the rest of the community. By arguing that the *campamento* was threatening to take away resources that would otherwise be used for the legitimate community, the municipality tried to sow the seeds of division between the *campamento* and the rest of the community. The strategy might be working: several community leaders that I spoke to about the *campamento* resented the presence of the *campamento* in the *comuna* and saw the leaders of the *campamento* as troublemakers.

After the video presentation, the assistant director of DIDECO asked community leaders to identify five issues that were of greatest concern to the community. “The first step in being an effective *dirigente*,” she told those present, “is to identify the problems that most concern the community *and that you can realistically handle*...remember we have only a limited amount of money to spend and we must decide how to spend it democratically.” Thus, the first step to proper participation is to identify the problems and to think of solutions that are realistic. The first step in the process of exercising effective citizenship, then, involved a recognition that the ability of the state to solve problems is limited. This first step implicitly entails an acceptance of the current neoliberal status quo and a willingness to stay within those parameters. Problems, therefore, have to be tangible, concrete problems that are disarticulated from broader concerns. Examples of problems formatted in this manner would be: potholes in the roads, unpaved roads, the lack of parks and plazas in the community, electric lighting, local crime and delinquency, garbage disposal, etc. Problems, in short, had to be stated as tangible, visible problems. Solutions, too, had to be cast in the same light.

With some guidance and input from municipal officials, the *dirigentes* came up with five issues that were of greatest concern to them: crime/drugs, welfare services, the environment, health care, and education. There was, however, little in the way of real debate about these issues. That is, each *dirigente* was told to write down two or three issues that most concerned him/her. This was followed by a short period of deliberation

and discussion about these issues. However, the discussion was to narrow the issues down to concrete, discrete topics.

After a consensus was reached concerning which five issues were most important, community leaders were divided into five task groups (*grupos de trabajo*), each of which was charged with responsibility for focusing on one of these specific issues, and to come up with a set of proposals to solve the problem. Each group sat in a small semi-circle and had a social worker working with them to assist them in coming up with solutions. The social worker carefully guided the discussion so that the proposals that were developed were realistic and germane to the issue. Proposals had to be within the realm of the possible. That is, solutions had to be framed within the context of funding for community development projects. Thus, proposals such as "more money for FONASA (the national health care system)" or "a program for the unemployed" or the "nationalization of the health care system" were not feasible or realistic because they were outside the parameters of the neoliberal consensus (in general, proposals that would entail an expansion of citizenship rights were not acceptable in this context). Such options were implicitly kept off the agenda by municipal social workers who moderated the debate. Instead, they were to think in terms of how to use part of the available funds for a project that would help to address and alleviate the problem.

This, then, was the second step in the ritualization of the civic volunteer mode of participation. Social workers instructed the *dirigentes* to think of tangible things that would help them address the problem with which they were concerned and to remember that available money was limited. Each task group was encouraged to come up with ideas for community projects that would address the particular issue to which the group was assigned. Group discussions were moderated by a social worker from DIDECO. Social workers guided the conversations and deliberations of each of the groups by keeping the discussion focused on the issues at hand.



I first sat with the group that was concerned with the environment. It is important to point out that the question of industrial encroachment did not even come up in this smaller subgroup. Instead, community leaders proposed ideas to clean up the municipality that did not challenge the penetration of industries into Huechuraba. One person suggested that a *microbasural* (empty lot used informally as a garbage dump) be cleaned up and that funds be devoted to hire a truck to haul the refuse away. Another proposed that more garbage trucks be purchased by the municipality. Yet another suggested that money be spent for teaching courses on the environment in community centers. There was not one voice raised that in anyway challenged the paradigm. Instead, the proposals were within the scope of the status quo.

After the meeting, I asked those who had participated in the environmental group why issues such as the relocation of industries to Huechuraba was never discussed. Pilar told me that they understood that this was not a possible solution, and that is why they never brought it up. Another *dirigente* told me that the mayor was in favor of bringing more industries into the *comuna* because they would give the municipality a better tax base. This was a curious answer. What did this have to do with the fact that these concerns were never brought up at the meeting? Luzmenia and Margarita, two of the militants, told me that if they brought these issues up at the meeting, their projects might not get funded. Bluntly put, if someone makes waves, their sector of the community might not get the project that they requested.

Next, I sat with the group that was concerned with the health care issue. This, I thought would be an area where there would be some discussion because one of the persistent demands of *poblador* health care committees has for the state to take more responsibility for health care. Health care is the responsibility of the state, and a fundamental right of citizenship. Yet, not one of the proposals had anything to do with the state's role in health care. Instead, one proposal called for the *consultorio* in Huechuraba to be open for more hours during the week. Another proposal suggested that

money be spent on a van to go to different communities in the municipality and vaccinate children. Yet, another proposal was to build a sports facility so that people in the community could get exercise. None of the proposals questioned the fundamental status quo of the health care system in the post structural adjustment period.

When one woman proposed that the government devote more money to health care in order to make more medicine available in the *consultorio*, she was told by the DIDECO social worker that was moderating her group that the PLADECO was not about deciding questions about national health care spending. This was a question for the central government to decide. Instead, the meeting was to see how community associations, using the resources available, could make a tangible difference in the community. Moreover, this in itself was presented as a topic that was beyond discussion: the social worker's comment indicated that the question of what role citizens were to play in deciding issues was not up for discussion. Because no one else spoke out in support of the suggestion made by the lone "dissenter", her suggestion seemed out of place and improper. In short, the implicit suggestion--as the woman who made the suggestion for increased funding for health care later recognized--was that citizens really did not have a role to play (save for voting in elections) in deciding these broader issues.

When I asked Luzmenia why these broader concerns in the areas of the environment and health care had not been brought up, she pointed out that "they (the municipality) can't solve these problems...they will simply tell us that the municipality can't solve these questions, and that we should deal with what can be solved." She then went on to point out how a few years ago they had gone to the municipality to demand improvements in public housing programs only to be told to go the ministry of housing to seek a solution to the problem. These sentiments were echoed by other council leaders who were at the PLADECO meeting. Thus, while the municipality is accessible and allows for popular participation, the areas over which it has scope are limited, which limits the impact that groups can have vis a vis the municipality. Community leaders had already

learned to accept the scope of the meetings as a fait accompli: there was little effort made to bring up issues that fell outside the scope of the municipality's agenda.

Several features of these meetings are important: first, an effort was made to make it appear as if the municipality and the community had common interests and goals. That is, there was an effort to downplay potential conflict and points of contention between the community and the municipality. In the video, for example, the municipality was portrayed as working for the community, and the community was pictured as an ally of the municipality. A deliberate attempt was made to foster the image of a harmonious community working together to solve its problems. Also, many of the problems of the community were blamed on the central government (*es culpa del centralismo*). The message is that "municipality is trying to solve problems, but we are strapped by the central government." This is one of the strategies used by mayors to deflect criticism—blame the central government.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, mayors have often tried to make the case that the *comuna* is competing against other *comunas* for government funds, and therefore the community should stand behind their mayor.

To a certain extent, municipal governments do have a case. There are many limitations that plague municipal governments: they are not empowered to decide many key issues, they lack an adequate financial base, poor municipalities depend heavily on the central government, many of the funds that they get from the central government must be spent in certain ways, etc. These chronic deficiencies have weakened the capacity of municipal governments for self-government.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in many ways municipal governments are merely administrators of funds that come from the central government with strings attached. One of the tacit assumptions of these meetings was that the

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<sup>19</sup>In one of the municipalities that I visited, (La Pintana) the mayor had posted signs on telephone poles asking residents to excuse the potholes in the road, and pointing out that these "are not the fault of the municipality, they are the fault of *centralismo*."

<sup>20</sup>Nickson, Andrew 1995. *Local Government in Latin America* Boulder: Lynne Rienner

municipality is limited in what it can do and that the larger institutional framework was too difficult to change. Municipal officials used this as a strategy to limit the scope of the issues that could be discussed. They would often point out that "we don't control these types of issues" or "we are not the municipality of Las Condes,"<sup>21</sup> we are only a poor municipality" These types of arguments were used by council leaders as well to explain the lack of progress on tangible community problems. In a meeting of his neighborhood council, Raul Ibaceta explained to those gathered why the municipality has not been able to pave several roads in the community by comparison to Las Condes, one of the wealthiest municipalities in Chile:

The municipality of Las Condes can solve their problems because they are a rich municipality...but in Huechuraba we are a poor community, and therefore we can't solve our problems because we don't have the resources needed to solve the problems we have.

This makes it pointless to bring broader issues up at these meetings.

More generally, the way in which issues are organized into coherent frameworks has been to a certain extent redefined through decentralization. Decentralization, in short, has rearranged discursive space by enframing the local. While local issues (garbage collection, crime, and schools) have emerged to become important issues, decentralization has also made it more difficult to discursively link local issues--such as the lack of public space, or the dearth of adequate housing--to a structural/global or ideological context. Thus, while decentralization has an empowering quality in that it facilitates access and the resolution of a significant range of tangible microlevel issues, when viewed from another dimension it also fosters a perception of increasing distance from national concerns because it disarticulates those issues from a broader frame of reference. Implicit in participation at the municipal level was a disarticulation of local concerns from broader political debates. From the perspective of the members of the *Union Comunal*, then,

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<sup>21</sup>Las Condes is the wealthiest *comuna* in Santiago.

decentralization has amounted to a rearrangement of the social spaces within which broader movements coalesce, making real influence more difficult to achieve.

There were also subtle effects on participation that took place in these meetings. DIDECO officials went to great lengths to make the case to the participants that the PLADECO and the type of participation that takes place at these meetings as the epitome of democratic participation. Thus, she pointed out at the beginning of the meeting: "Here you as citizens of Huechuraba will decide what is best for Huechuraba. This is what living in a democracy is about. You will decide how the government does things."

Throughout the meeting, an effort was made to cast the PLADECO in the light of the essence of democracy. When viewed from one vantagepoint, PLADECOS are inclusive and seem to be a genuine attempt to incorporate the voice of the organized community in the process of municipal planning. They provided municipal officials with an opportunity to "take the pulse" of the community, and they provided a space for socializing with the mayor and municipal officials. When viewed through the neo-Tocquevillian prism of "making democracy work," these encounters would seem to indicate that local government provides more room for citizen participation.

Notably absent, however, was a debate about why there was only \$200,000 to spend on community programs. A concerted effort was also made to make this question seem to be beyond the scope of participation and beyond the purview of citizenship. This is a question that was reserved for technocrats who have more knowledge and access to the facts. Thus, PLADECOS also served to narrow debate around certain issues and to focus participation around certain specific questions.

### **PLADECOS as a form of Discipline**

There is, then, another dimension to the PLADECO (and other participatory arenas) that lurks latently beneath its democratic veneer: the participatory spaces that are created when the municipality and the organized community interact through the medium of social participation serve as the basis for the construction of a specific set of power

relationships, through processes that Foucault<sup>22</sup> referred to under the rubric of “discipline.” Discipline, observed Foucault, “makes individuals; it is a specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.”<sup>23</sup> In the context of the PLADECO, the techniques that fall under the rubric of discipline are wielded in the service of the project of forming citizens that will buttress the social order. This technique of power is not primarily intended as a tool to constrain or repress, but instead is seen as a mechanism to empower people to act in the field of citizenship in productive ways that support the current hegemony.

Discipline, Foucault also argued, establishes the “constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.”<sup>24</sup> In these social spaces where citizens encounter the municipality a double dynamic operates: through community development projects, citizens are empowered (the productive dimension of power and discipline), while at the same time the structures of domination are deepened (the social control dimension of power that works in capillary fashion). Through discipline, the increased aptitudes that come with the learning of citizenship skills--the ability to write petitions, to oversee the implementation of a community development project, to work with and through the municipality, to work with other groups in the community, also provide for an increased domination: when citizens properly utilize the skills they have acquired through the practices of participation, they are empowered in ways that buttress and perpetuate a system with which many have profound reservations and skepticism.

Discipline, Foucault explains, proceeds in several ways: through the spatial distribution of individuals and through the control of activity--discipline is a process for training individuals (in this case in the practices of correct forms of citizenship). From this perspective, then, engagements between the municipality and the community can be

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<sup>22</sup>Foucault, Michel *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* New York: Random House 1977

<sup>23</sup>*ibid.* p. 170

<sup>24</sup>*ibid.* p. 138

understood through the lens of discipline: first, the fact that the central locus of citizen participation is the municipality serves to spatially distribute community associations and popular participation. The spatial/administrative boundaries of the municipality established territorially bound administrative enclosures that segment participation and distribute associations through the compartmentalization of participatory space. Networks are broken down and reorganized, the locus of participation changes, and the discursive context changes.

The space created by the nexus between the municipality and the community also have the panoptic qualities that privilege such projects. Indeed, it was Tocqueville who pointed out that decentralized political systems can be more effective in carrying out a project that would seem to have contradictory objectives: on the one hand establish social control and on the other, the empowering of citizens: "Municipal spirit is an important element in order and public tranquility...if you take power and independence from a municipality, you may have docile subjects but you will not have citizens."<sup>25</sup> Municipal government, suggests Tocqueville, is an ideal setting for creating docile citizens (different from docile subjects because unlike subjects, citizenship implies active participation in constructing and sustaining the social order) because "political passions take on a different character when exercised so close to home."<sup>26</sup>

Second, one of the core purposes of these types of encounters--aside from deciding how to spend a specific amount of money--was an attempt to control and regulate the activities associated with participation through the supervision of the process of participation, and by the compartmentalization of the act of participation into different discrete activities. Dividing meetings into small groups of leaders, each overseen by a social worker, was a way of further compartmentalizing, enframing, and organizing the

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<sup>25</sup> Tocqueville, Alexis 1988. *Democracy in America* J.P. Mayer (ed.) New York: Harper Collins p.68  
<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p.69

practice of citizenship. Indeed, these meetings can be viewed as an attempt to rationalize and Taylorize participation in an attempt to instill specific forms of citizenship. DIDECO officials used these forums within the public transcript in an attempt to organize and institutionalize a particular form of civic participation that was defined as consistent with liberal polyarchy. A key part of this effort, in which of local government has a comparative advantage over centralized government, involved breaking the process of participation down into a series of discrete steps (deciding, discussing/consulting, petitioning, writing proposals, etc.). A second crucial element of the process was to define the agenda--to define what can be realistically accomplished through participation, which in effect defines the role of the citizen.

Social workers at these meetings moderated the process of participation with the goal of keeping the meeting focused on a concrete set of issues. In this way, they sought to instill a particular understanding of the role of the citizen by enframing the citizenship practices within certain parameters. They did this, however, by articulating the forms of participation developed in academic institutions and think tanks to popular understandings of participation--the communitarian, cooperative, harmonious model articulated by the pragmatists. In the process, they (perhaps unintentionally) disqualified and delegitimized other forms of participation that were anchored in popular understandings of the role of the citizen. Delegitimized understandings of citizenship--what could be called subjugated knowledges<sup>27</sup>--however, formed the basis for criticism of the current regime of social participation.

Viewed in this light, this dimension of the public transcript--encounters between the organized community and government--provides a way of understanding how the capillary and dispersed qualities of the disciplinary techniques utilized in these spaces become linked to the macroinstitutions of the modern state. The arenas to which

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<sup>27</sup>Foucault, Michel "Two Lectures" *Power/Knowledge* New York: Pantheon 1980



municipal-community interactions give rise are one of a range of localized, atomized spaces where citizenship practices are constructed. The municipality, however, also serves as the articulating mechanism between the state and popular communities. It is at once a compartmentalized autonomous administrative space and a mechanism that articulates the state to the streets of popular communities--i.e. to the *pasaje*. Without spaces to articulate the state and the *pasaje*, the state, as one scholar eloquently describes, can become "an island cut off from the city that surges violently around it."<sup>28</sup> The PLADECO and other meetings like it--encounters between municipality and the world of the *pobla*--indirectly links the state to the community and the *pasaje*. In this sense, the Chilean state has been able to embed itself in society.

Smaller community settings--like the municipality--with their close knit web of relationships and frequent interactions between municipal officials and community activists are perhaps an ideal space for processing out, containing, or dampening differences that can be destabilizing. The community setting allows for closer interaction between citizens and municipal officials. Thus, it also enhances the capacity for surveillance of the community by municipal officials and it also facilitates self-surveillance by citizens. At the same time, however, communities can also be a site for resistance.

Working with different groups within the community, municipal officials resorted to a variety of strategies to attempt to marginalize differences and conflict and to generate an appearance of consensus and unity. They played on the differences between pragmatists and militants in an effort to squelch and marginalize the more strident rhetoric of the militants. They invited the *dirigentes* who played by the rules and cooperated to luncheons and teas, while marginalizing the troublemakers. Seating arrangements at municipal functions revealed much about the complex system of alliances and rivalries that

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<sup>28</sup>Berman, Marshall 1982. *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books p.186

existed among the *dirigentes*. Those who were loyal to the mayor and the council were given preferential seating nearer to the mayor and the council at these functions, while troublemakers were seated further away. Blocs of actors within the community were mobilized to process out differences that could potentially be threatening to social order. Some differences were simply ignored, while others were dealt with on a piecemeal basis.

Municipal officials built informal alliances with pragmatist participants in the community to mobilize bias against the militants, who were portrayed as potentially dangerous radicals and as a threat to the existing democracy. Despite praising her combative spirit and her contributions against the dictatorship, municipal officials pictured Luzmenia and militant activists as too radical and extreme, and they argued that people like them were a threat to the stability of post-transition democracy. This “rhetoric of disorder”—i.e. the argument that alternative forms of participation, such as protest and activism, destroys democracy—played on the fear of many *pobladores* that democracy can be reversed if they misbehave by demanding too much. In their informal conversations with *dirigentes*, municipal officials also argued that the more radical activists were anachronistic throwbacks to a bygone era, and that their demands are no longer realistic in the post-authoritarian period. In the municipality, then, what could be called a hegemonic bloc of actors, comprised of municipal officials and the organized community acted to effectively deal with differences that could not be processed within the context of the current social order. Conflicts that do not fall within the parameters of acceptable differences were treated by the municipality and a bloc of residents that supported these views (and the state) as illegitimate and are marginalized. This was possible, however, by building on the capillary forms of power that were already present in the interstices of the social fabric of the community.

This is perhaps one of the underlying reasons for the widespread perception among lower income groups that the “government doesn’t listen to us” and that the “government does not know our needs.” It is not the case that the government “doesn’t listen.” It is

instead that many of the core demands of the popular sectors are processed out of the system before they even reach the system--they are processed out at the municipal level. It is precisely those "differences", then, that have been processed out of the system that are at the heart of many popular grievances.

The vision of a consensual and unified community however, concealed and obscured from view many forms of oppression, marginalization, exclusion, and low intensity resistance to such exclusionary processes. These sites of antagonism continued to exist on the margins of the community and did not disappear. They continued to lurk in the shadows of the existing consensus, and at times could burst on the public stage to become the source of acrimonious conflicts. Indeed, there is a saying that Luzmenia used in describing Huechuraba, and that captures the contradictions of community: "*pueblo chico, infierno grande*" (small community, big inferno). This saying means that below what would appear to be a consensual community there can be tremendous latent conflicts that are worked out in different ways.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE FACES OF RESISTANCE AND CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE *MUNI*

#### **Introduction: The Ambiguities of Clientelistic Relationships**

Luzmenia and the militants, like the pragmatists in the *Union Comunal*, spent most of their time engaged in activities that at first blush can be viewed through the prism of some form of subordinate “clientelism” and “co-optation.” Also like the pragmatists, they spent most of their time engaged in face-to-face encounters with municipal officials and these encounters generally took the form of meetings between individual (or small groups) of organizational leaders and social workers at DIDECO.

This face-to-face style of interaction between individuals and state officials is seen by scholars of clientelism as one of the cornerstones of “clientelistic” behavior.<sup>1</sup> In the literature, clientelism is also generally associated with a popular political culture that lacks class consciousness and that stresses fatalism and deference toward the authority of professionals and technocrats.<sup>2</sup> Clientelism is based on “the absence of an orientation toward seeking material or other benefits by making demands on the political system.”<sup>3</sup> That is, clientelistic behavior is based upon an extremely limited understanding of the rights of citizenship. Clientelism is built upon a mode of participation that seeks satisfaction of material demands through the granting of small favors.

#### **The “Projectification” of Participation**

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<sup>1</sup>Stokes, Susan 1995. *Cultures in Conflict Social Movements and the State in Peru* Berkeley: University of California Press; Lande, Carl H. 1977. “The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism” *Friends, Followers, and Factions A Reader in Political Clientelism* Steffen W. Schmidt, James C Scott, Carl Lande, and Laura Guasti (eds.) Berkeley: University of California Press

<sup>2</sup>Stokes, 1995 op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Stokes, 1995 op. cit. p.25

Luzmenia and many of the *dirigentes* spent most of their weekday mornings at the municipality, in the offices of DIDECO and SECPLAC, talking to social workers and bureaucrats, primarily in search of resources--in the form of "projects"-- for their *unidad vecinal*. In general, organizational leaders spend a good deal of their time going to the municipality in the act of searching for and applying for funds for development projects for their *poblaciones*. The primary form of encounter between the municipality and the *pasaje*, then, is the dyadic encounter between the individual community leader and the municipal official (DIDECO official, social worker). Another common form of encounter occurs between small groups of *dirigentes* and a municipal social worker. Embedded in this dyadic relationship, however, are a set of tensions that challenge many of the assumptions about the culture that motivates clientelism.

One of the most common questions that *dirigentes*--militants as well as pragmatists--constantly asked of DIDECO officials, representatives of the central government, and NGOs was whether they were aware of any "*proyectos*" for which they were eligible to apply. Indeed, for many *dirigentes*, the "*proyecto*" has emerged to become one of the primary objectives of participation and of interaction with municipal officials. On a daily basis, the primary mode of popular participation for *dirigentes* is centered largely around filling out petitions and proposals for community development projects--community beautification projects, electric lighting for streets, pavement for roads, etc. Community development projects are funded through a myriad of different agencies (FOSIS, SERNAM, JUNDEP, etc.), programs (*Chile Barrio*, *Ayuda a la Microempresa*, *Chile Joven*, *Pavimentacion Participativa*, etc.), and funds (FONDEVE, FNDR, etc.). The "*proyecto*", then, has become one of the tangible cornerstones upon which social participation is organized. Popular participation is organized largely around petitioning--i.e. filling out proposals--for projects granted through the many community development programs created by FOSIS and other agencies.

One could plausibly speak, then, of the attempted "projectification" of popular participation: the attempt to reduce and organize the act of participating around the seeking out and pursuit of development projects for the community. One indicator of the extent to which participation has been "projectified" is that in many of the interviews that I had with *dirigentes* of community organizations, the *dirigentes* often asked me whether I could connect them with an NGO, or with someone in the central government who would know of a "*proyecto*" to which they could apply.

Projectification can be seen as another technique of discipline in that it attempts to focus and organize the process of participation around a set of tangible activities designed to gain access to community development. There are a series of concrete steps that *dirigentes* must take in order to gain access to a community development project: they must tailor their demand to fit in with a particular program (that is, is it a project designed for citizen security, is it a project for health care, is it a project for infrastructure, etc.). Once the project has been classified and categorized, *dirigentes* must fill out a project proposal with certain specifications (cost, time frame, etc.). Finally, they must work with municipal social workers (and in many cases with NGOs) to oversee implementation of the project.

Luzmenia's almost daily trips to DIDECO and her occasional trips to government ministries in search of the "*proyecto*" have made her an expert in dealing with government bureaucracies. As she put it: "You have to learn to snake your way through the system in order to get what you want." Everyone in the municipality--from the mayor to the guards who stand at the entrance to the municipal complex--knows Luzmenia and the core group of militant leaders who are constantly inside the municipality dealing with the municipal bureaucracy. The mayor and many of the people at DIDECO see her and many other *dirigentes* as a kind of pest--as people who are constantly seeking access and demanding their time and energy.

In some ways, then, it could be argued that Luzmenia and the militants--many of whom in the 1980s were throwing molotov cocktails at riot police--have become somewhat of a paper tiger: while they talk about building movements and raising consciousness, they cannot seem to get support within the community for such a project. Shut out by the pragmatists in the *Union Comunal*, their behavior--i.e. their constant search for *proyectos*--would seem to be a tangible admission of defeat. As Luzmenia put it: "The dream died and making it relive again will be very difficult. People are reluctant to make such a commitment because they are afraid that it will end in disaster. They have seen too many defeats." Thus, instead of raising consciousness and building popular power, she--like most community leaders who take their positions seriously--spends most of her time during the day in the hallways and offices of the municipality, trying to gain access to information about resources that are available from the municipality and the state, and cultivating a network of relationships with municipal council members and with key municipal bureaucrats and social workers in order to facilitate the flow of such information. As a general rule, she treats municipal officials with respect (despite bitterly criticizing them when she is not in their presence). From one perspective, then, Luzmenia and the militants have become embedded in a web of co-optation that keeps demands manageable, and that the system can sustain.

Luzmenia's "clientelistic" behavior in the municipality, however, was not driven out of a deep seated conviction that confrontation does not work, or that her position in society is somehow etched in stone, or as a result of an absence of class consciousness, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>4</sup> In this view of the culture associated with clientelism, clientelistic behavior is associated with a "political culture in which strains of deference and fatalism coexist with upper class affinity."<sup>5</sup> In Luzmenia's (and the other militants)

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<sup>4</sup>Stokes 1995 op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Stokes 1995 op. cit. p.16

case, however, clientelistic behavior was not the product of a deferential and fatalistic, political culture. Indeed, beneath the surface veneer of clientelistic behavior was a deep sense of anger at having to petition and compete for what she saw as basic and fundamental rights. "These projects should be our right...we shouldn't have to petition for them...why should we have to beg for medicine for the *consultorio*, or for a park for the children?" she muttered indignantly to me under her breath, while between offices in the municipality. Luzmenia saw the petitioning process, the entire edifice of the "*proyecto*" system as a form of organized begging.

Luzmenia's "clientelistic" behavior, then, was in large measure a strategic response to the existing configuration of power, where support for more confrontational tactics among the rank-and-file is extremely limited. As she and the other militants put it:

We can't organize because we don't have the support...people are still too afraid to demand their rights. We talk to people sometimes, but they don't want to have anything to do with mobilization and protest...they say they don't want to end up in jail. It takes time to build consciousness and to take the fear away from people.

What seemed to be Luzmenia's "clientelistic" behavior vis a vis the municipality was driven in large part by the dynamics of the *Union Comunal* and her neighborhood council, where a majority has been able to build and consolidate a particular civic etiquette and mode of participation vis a vis the municipality that limits and constrains participation, and in effect suppresses dissident voices before they even receive a full hearing. Unable to persuade the majority of the leaders in the *Union Comunal* or the rank and file membership of her neighborhood council to organize to pressure the municipality and demand substantive changes, she is in a sense forced to participate according to the rules set forth by the state and the municipality.

But this is not the end of the story. Somewhat paradoxically, Luzmenia and the militants were viewed by many municipal officials as troublemakers. Yet, at first blush, they seemed to be carrying out their duties as *dirigentes* in a responsible way. They



seemed, in other words, to be participating in an orderly manner and following the rules of the participation game. Yet, as one of the DIDECO social workers put it: "They're always here looking for things, and they are demanding...they expect us to solve their problems immediately." One of the social workers at DIDECO privately referred to Luzmenia and those like her as a "*ladilla*"<sup>6</sup> (a louse)--i.e. as someone who is always badgering and pestering municipal officials. The attitude of the social workers was puzzling to me, since her behavior would seem to be more manageable and controllable than protest and contentious collective action, which had become increasingly less frequent since the democratic moment of the early 1990s. That is to say, municipal officials prefer to see individual *dirigentes* in their office than a coalition of *dirigentes* mobilizing the community.

Seen from another perspective, however, Luzmenia's constant--almost daily--engagement with officials in the municipality can be viewed as a conscious and deliberate strategy of prying open an elitist, hierarchical system that takes advantage of the weakest links--what could be called the achilles heel--of the system to gain access. Her constant presence in the municipality constituted, in effect, a subtle strategy that relies on applying pressure through a low intensity, yet sustained form of harassment. She takes advantage of the rhetoric of municipal openness to the citizen and of a government that is "close to the people" to be a constant presence in the municipal offices, and to demand that DIDECO officials act to, as she puts it "serve the people." DIDECO and SECPLAC officials try to avoid her, but she will search them down and wait them out tirelessly, and make demands of them.

On one of the many trips to DIDECO that I made with Luzmenia (and in this instance two other *dirigentes*), she found the office of the social worker in charge of dealing with neighborhood council leaders empty. She turned to me, and said that the

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<sup>6</sup>The term "*ladilla*" (literally "louse") is equivalent in English to "pain in the neck."

social workers were hiding from them. This was routine, she said, “when they know that we are coming, they find somewhere else to be because they know we’ll make them do their job.” But, Luzmenia argued, that strategy would not work:

They think that they can hide from us, but they have to see us, it’s their job. If they don’t I will send a complaint to the mayor. The municipality is supposed to be democratic. In democracy, the government is for the people...so they have to attend us.

Thus, Luzmenia holds the rhetoric of democracy over the heads of municipal officials like a moral weapon. In her view, “government for the people” and “government with the people”--two of the themes of the *concertacion*--made DIDECO officials the servants of the people, hence they were obligated to attend to her demands. Her incessant presence in DIDECO and SECPLAC, in short, were also a way of using the *concertacion*’s own language of democracy as a tool to gain access to the system, and to ultimately attempt to change the dynamics of state-society relations from a hierarchical authoritarian relationship to a more horizontal, egalitarian relationship. Her constant presence constituted a form of pressure that could not be easily suppressed because overt repression--the utilization of coercive mechanisms to physically remove her from the municipality--would undermine the mantle of democracy upon which the *concertacion* stakes its claim to legitimacy. Thus, it takes seriously and at face value the municipality’s rhetoric of participation and openness to create a subtle form of pressure. The language of democracy, then, has been appropriated as a language of resistance.

In short, what at first blush would seem to be clientelistic behavior and co-optation is also at the same time a form of resistance to the attempts by the municipality to manage and control participation. Since Luzmenia has been unable to build popular power in the municipality in the form of powerful social movements articulated to left parties (due to a combination of apathy and fear of the *pobladores*), she and other militant organizational leaders have adopted another strategy that relies less on the power of numbers and mobilization and instead appropriates the democratic elements of the discourse of “social

participation" and turns it into a space for a very subtle form of resistance to the limitations on participation that social participation attempts to create and that cannot be suppressed.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that this form of resistance has not significantly changed the existing overall status quo. Indeed, from the perspective of the state, this daily tug-of-war between municipal officials and *dirigentes* goes virtually unnoticed. Yet, the strategy of maintaining a constant presence has provided Luzmenia and the militants access to the system, and it forces municipal officials to recognize and deal with their demands. The mayor and DIDECO social workers have a grudging admiration for Luzmenia's tenacity and her stamina in the face of bureaucratic inertia. They know that in dealing with her, they must be careful because she knows the rules of the game as well as they do. Indeed, after several visits to the municipality, the militants constant presence began to look much like a small hoard of locusts that work their way into the system and refuse to go away empty handed. They were always there, walking around the offices of DIDECO, with their notebooks in hand seeking access to the municipality and the information that municipal officials control.

The relationship between militant *dirigentes* and officials in the municipality appeared to be a cordial relationship, yet beneath the surface of correctness and politeness there was a tension that occasionally erupted into acrimonious fights. Conflicts emerged over a variety of issues: one of the most common sources of conflict occurred when *dirigentes* would get angry with municipal officials when they sensed that a particular project was being given to somebody on the basis of favoritism--i.e. partisan favoritism, personal favoritism, as a reward for loyal behavior, etc. Another source of tension occurred when the municipality attempted to cut funding for a particular social service or attempted to assess a fee for a service. Thus, the constant presence of the *dirigentes* in the municipality, and their watchfulness over projects served as a check on favoritism.

The characteristics of the dyadic relationship between *dirigentes* and municipal officials reveals the fluid and dynamic nature of clientelistic relationships: these relationships oscillated between what often seemed to be the personalistic, deferential relationships that are traditionally associated with clientelism and intense, acrimonious conflict laden interactions that pitted *dirigentes* against municipal officials. Although there was a co-optive, clientelistic dimension to these linkages, relationships between DIDECO staff and the militants shows that these relationships can be Janus-faced as militants were able to utilize them as a vehicle to wage a form of low intensity resistance that did not require the existence of complex mobilizing structures or of utopian meta-narratives. Resistance, instead, was framed largely in what Foucault has called subjugated knowledges: "an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production...whose validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought."<sup>7</sup> These subjugated knowledges are part of the broader common sense of the *pasaje*.

In some ways, then, the small scale tug of war between the *dirigentes* and the municipality can be seen as a reflection of one of the salient characteristics of contemporary society that is highlighted in postmodern writing: there is no grand meta-narrative to legitimate counterhegemonic political action.<sup>8</sup> According to many postmodernists, the politics of the grand confrontation are replaced by fragmented and decentered struggles that attempt to undermine power hierarchies at the site such where power hierarchies are practiced. In this context, dominant discourses and the power relations that they inform and sustain are challenged in fragmented struggles on the margins of society. Informing these forms of resistance is a variety of subjugated knowledges. Postmodernists eschew any grand narratives because of their totalizing

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<sup>7</sup>Foucault, Michel 1994. "Two Lectures" *Culture/Power/History* Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner (eds.) Princeton University Press p.202

<sup>8</sup>Lyotard, J. 1984. *The Post-Modern Condition* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

tendencies. Foucault argued that only through a "pluralistic and multi-faceted attack on localized practices of repression can a global challenge to capitalism be mounted."<sup>9</sup>

While postmodernist readings celebrate these decentered struggles as liberating, the realities of the low key struggle between a dominant discourse and a fragmented *pasaje* should give cause for some concern: in the absence of a meta-narrative to inform participation, many community leaders waged a low key battle in small, smoke filled municipal offices to achieve piecemeal and fragmented objectives that while yielding tangible gains, in no way change the status quo. This battle was ultimately waged largely on the terms set by the municipality. *Dirigentes* fought for greater access to the programs being offered by the state through the municipality. As Pilar, in one of her more nostalgic moments, framed the issue:

Before, we were always struggling for something that had real meaning. Now what are we fighting for? We fight among ourselves for some plants to beautify a community center or for some street lights, or for a park bench. We fight for the bread crumbs that fall off the table. In the end we still have to get up everyday and still find some way to *para la olla* (put food on the table).

The argument that participation and politics will not solve fundamental problems of daily living is a cornerstone of the dominant narrative of self-reliant citizenship. Pilar's statement can be understood as a nostalgia for the past, when utopian meta-narratives promised a resolution to this dilemma through popular collective action. Pilar's comments (coming from a former militant member of the communist party) suggest that the death of the meta-narrative and the fragmentation of the subject has led to a profound sense of alienation. Victor then turned to me and added to Pilar's observation: "These are the goodies that they give us to keep us quiet. The street lights and the plants are our reward for good behavior...they are trying to teach us to be good citizens."

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<sup>9</sup>Harvey, David 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers p.46

Indeed, in many ways, the very premise of the current system is to fragment and atomize popular struggles. That is, the structures upon which power rest are designed in such a way to tolerate these types of low intensity struggles. The system is designed to account for and absorb forms of resistance that Foucault called the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges.”<sup>10</sup> The edifice of power upon which post-authoritarian democracy rests has a high tolerance for such forms of struggle. One of the arguments in support of administrative decentralization is that it would contain popular participation by fragmentation and by enframing and compartmentalizing popular organizations in discrete territorially defined administrative spaces with limited jurisdiction over issues. It would also allow the government to more effectively target social programs.

The emergence and agonizing death of these utopian narratives, furthermore, seems to be in some ways more detrimental than if there had been no utopia at all because their existence in popular memory leaves behind an imprint that provides a bitter legacy of failure. It permitted Victor to see that the street lights and the plants were a subtle form of domination and control. It also allowed him to shrug his shoulders and mutter: “but, what else can we do?” In short, it allowed the *pasaje* to imagine--for a brief instant--an alternative social reality. What Pablo Neruda once wrote about love is applicable here: “*Es tan corto el amor y tan largo el olvido*” (Love is so short and forgetting is so long).<sup>11</sup> These utopias still permeate the *pasaje*, a physical space that is indelibly tattooed with historical memories of past popular struggles.

### Contentious Encounters: The “Toma” of the Clinic

At times the tensions and contradictions that were worked out in the course of the give and take of dyadic encounters between *dirigentes* and municipal officials, exploded onto the public space of the municipality. Thus, despite the existence of powerful

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<sup>10</sup>Foucault, 1994 op. cit. p.202

<sup>11</sup>Neruda, Pablo “Poema 20” *Veinte Poemas de Amor y Una Cancion Desesperada* Santiago

institutional obstacles to popular mobilization and protest, contentious collective conflicts still take place periodically in Huechuraba. Over time, however, these more contentious forms of collective action have diminished considerably. Collective protests have become fewer in number, less intense in scope, and pose relatively little threat to the established order. As Gloria Allende, a socialist municipal councilwoman in Huechuraba put it:

In the first few months after the transition, there was a lot of protest in the municipality. But, now people have learned how to deal with the municipality, and we have established good relations with the community. So, there is much less protest and mobilization now...instead, people write petitions.<sup>12</sup>

The decline in the number of contentious encounters between the organized community and the municipal government was also confirmed in interviews with leaders of Huechuraba's organized community.

A number of factors account for this decline. As the political opportunity structure has shifted against such actions, people have become less willing to organize to challenge the status quo. Since the transition, the relationship between the municipality and the community has become routinized and institutionalized and a network of relationships have developed between bureaucrats and activists in the community. Municipal government has also co-opted many of those organizations, and their leaders, who had in the past led efforts to challenge the municipality. This has deprived would be challengers of important mobilizing structures, and it has made the process of mobilizing consensus in favor of protest more difficult. The lack of credible alternatives to the current social order is also a key factor.

Interviews with community leaders, however, also suggest an additional factor that has not been extensively examined in the social movement literature: movement exhaustion. People have simply grown weary of taking to the streets in protest, only to be abandoned and defeated by political leaders. As Pilar put it:

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<sup>12</sup>Interview with Gloria Allende, councilwoman (PS) in the municipality of Huechuraba February 1998

We are tired of protest and mobilization. People saw that it didn't really get them anywhere during the dictatorship, so everyone has decided to go home. The only ones that are still willing to go to the streets are people like Luzmenia, but there aren't many of them left.

The lack of alternatives helps to create a sense that the current social order is immutable, which has undoubtedly played a role in shaping the individual calculus of protest.

Nevertheless, despite the attempts of municipalities and the central government to build a pliant and cooperative civil society the embers of social conflict continue to smolder beneath what would seem to be the calm surface of good social relations between the municipality and the community in many popular communities. That is to say, beneath a calm surface, there are fairly strong tensions that stem from the unaddressed issues of the transition. Usually these tensions are negotiated in the offices of DIDECO between *dirigentes* and social workers.

They also manifest themselves, however, through a variety of localized forms of popular resistance and struggle. The resistance that these social conflicts generate, however, is primarily limited to the administrative and geographical space of the municipality. Indeed, municipalization has changed the face of contestation and given rise to a new mode of popular struggle: a patchwork of localized seemingly unrelated conflicts dots the landscape of municipal governments. Contentious collective action, then, has been largely displaced from the plazas and avenues that are adjacent to the offices of the central government in downtown Santiago--where the *pueblo* had at one time traditionally manifested itself--to more localized spaces: the municipal garbage dump, the peripheral road, the public housing complex, the squatter settlement, the local health care clinic, or the offices of DIDECO. This displacement of conflict from the center to the periphery stems from the increasing insulation of the central government and the easier access to municipal governments. Moreover, downtown Santiago is much more intimidating than it once was: surrounding the Moneda and the area that is the seat of the central government is a large contingent of security forces that are overtly displayed to dissuade would be



protesters: police buses, water cannon, armored vehicles, etc. all serve as warnings that protest will not be tolerated.

Only rarely have these conflicts broadened by spilling over into adjacent municipalities, and out onto the Alameda, and they have never really posed a threat to the neoliberal project—despite the fact that the grievances that give rise to these conflicts often have to do with fundamental differences with the neoliberal social order. The outcome of these conflicts has generally been the defeat or the co-optation of those leading the challenge. Most conflicts that I witnessed ended in compromises where the state sacrificed some resources, but where the basic pillars of the system were preserved intact.

Popular struggles, in short, have assumed the form of a series of seemingly unrelated microlevel contestations that take place primarily at the local level. Within the municipality of Huechuraba, resistance assumes various forms: in the offices of DIDECO, individual *dirigentes* have had bitter disputes with DIDECO officials, contentious encounters also take place between small groups of people and officials in the municipality, and finally between segments of the organized community and municipal officials. These encounters have on occasion become very acrimonious and personal. Individually, these actions seem to be incoherent and directed toward addressing a single local issue.

Collectively, however, these actions can be read as the atomized, fragmented expressions of the disillusion and anger that is felt that the transition has been truncated. Thus, from these microlevel protests, we can glean fragmentary evidence that alternative visions still lurk beneath the neoliberal facade. There is a common rhetorical thread behind many of these protests: demands for an expansion of social citizenship rights and for the state to assume a more central role in satisfying the demands of the urban popular sectors. Demands are most often framed in the context of the rights of the poor to shelter from adverse market forces and the responsibility of the state to provide this shelter.

### **The Municipality as “Firefighter”**

These localized social conflicts highlight another important role played by the municipality in ensuring the post-transition social order. The role of the municipality in dealing with these conflicts is much like that of a firefighter: the primary mission of a firefighter is to contain the fire, and make sure that it does not spread, and then to put it out. After the fire has been extinguished, firemen will keep an eye on the area for embers that can occasionally flare up. One of the primary tactics of firefighters is to dig trenches and to burn areas so as to contain the fire.

Similarly, the role of the municipality is to contain the conflict and ensure that it remains confined to the municipality. Indeed, as we saw, the municipality was seen by the dictatorship as an administrative space that would make populations more manageable. In their interactions with community leaders, Huechuraba officials also listen to the community for the grumblings of popular discontent. Nevertheless, despite these strategies, the municipality of Huechuraba has not been able to impose a seamless hegemony over the surface of the community: beneath what would seem to be a smooth surface seethes a wide range of conflicts and grievances. What the municipality has been partially successful in doing, however, is to structure resistance such that it assumes a localized, fragmented form. The administrative boundaries between municipalities operate like a controlled burn: they establish spatial parameters to social conflict. In this sense, then, the municipality creates a distribution of space within which the dynamics of social conflict unfolds.

Most often, localized conflicts pit leaders and constituents of popular organizations against the municipality and are generally organized by the militants in the community who are willing to continue to struggle in the face of all of the obstacles. On certain occasions the militants are able to mobilize a number of people in the community in support of contentious collective action. Sometimes, these conflicts have to do with the state's attempt to evict squatters. Other times, they erupt over localized issues, such as garbage

collection fees. Other conflicts, however, occur over more fundamental grievances that go to the heart of the neoliberal order.

One such conflict took place in 1998 between Huechuraba's health care committees (*Comites de Salud*) and the municipality over the health care budget. When the budget for women and children's health care and nutrition was threatened by cuts stemming from the 1998 recession, Luzmenia—who was one of the leaders of the health care committee—organized and led a “*toma*” of the primary care clinic in order to pressure the municipality and act as a voice for the women of the community in health care issues. As Luzmenia saw it: “The only way for the poor and the workers to get anything is to organize and raise hell. Without organization, the rich will run over us.” Organization, in short, is the weapon of the weak. Some of the other women on the health care committee were communists, others socialists, a few were Christian Democrats, and some had no particular political affiliation. Some of them had been involved with Luzmenia in the struggle against the dictatorship, and others had been involved with the Democratic Alliance. However, most of these women were activists whose political identities had been shaped by some form of participation in popular organizations in the 1960s and early 70s, or in the 1980s (in the struggle against the dictatorship). The leaders of the protest were women who had been involved in collective action since the founding of their communities. They were a diverse group—some were Christian Democrats, some were socialists, and others—like Luzmenia—were lifelong members of the communist party. What they shared was a conceptualization of the rights of the poor that was anchored in the pre-neoliberal era.

All of the women that joined the health care committee had one thing in common: they viewed the blending of market mechanisms and health care as amounting to an assault on the rights of citizens, particularly popular sector women.<sup>13</sup> That is, despite having

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<sup>13</sup>This reveals some of the positive outcomes of the decline of political parties as the points of reference

different views on other issues, they all agreed that good health care should not be only for those who can afford it. Health care and profit considerations were seen as antithetical to each other. Subjecting health care to the whims of the marketplace was disadvantageous to the poor and the working class. The committee members saw health care in terms of a basic social right of citizenship:

Health is a basic right that everyone should have. How can it be that only those who can afford to pay get health care? Right now, the more money you have, the more health you have...that is not democratic.

They rejected the notion that those who can pay should receive better health care than the poor. The private health care system (structured much like the HMO system in the US) was seen as extremely unfair to the poor. The state, they argued, should play a fundamental role in assuring that all citizens receive adequate health care. They used what could be called a “democracy” frame to advance their claim. They used the rhetorical language of democracy--i.e. of the social citizenship rights associated with democracy--to frame their demand and to make the case that their demand was fair and reasonable:

We are in supposedly in democracy. How can it be that in democracy, the poor are denied basic health care? How can it be that women have to get up at four in the morning to stand in line outside the *consultorio* to get an appointment to see a doctor, and the rich only have to pick up the phone? Is this democracy?

This was a purposeful tactic that framed demands in a language easily understandable by a state led by a political elite that organizes itself around the rhetoric of democracy.

The logic, as Luzmenia explained it, is as follows: democracy, she argued, is about equality. She understood equality in material terms to mean that every citizen should have a right to full health care. In short, the committee shared what could be called a particular “moral economy” of health care that was rooted in a conceptualization of the role of the state as a hedge against a market that is viewed as discriminatory against the poor and the

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around which people organize: this committee would have been unthinkable in the pre-1973 period.

working class. Democracy, in the view of the women of the health care committee, was defined by a state that took the material rights of the poor into account. Thus, the concerns that motivated these activists were linked to broader structural questions and to the role of government in ensuring the rights of social citizenship: the basic right of all to decent health care. Yet, the form that the conflict would assume would be that of a localized conflict taking place in the context of one municipality.

It is important to point out that basically the same concerns have motivated other protests in other municipalities: the *pobladores* of La Victoria (a *poblacion* in the municipality of Pedro Aguirre Cerda located on the other side of Santiago) threatened to take over the primary health care clinic in La Victoria over a conflict having to do with the right to adequate health care. Indeed, the petition given to the mayor of Pedro Aguirre Cerda (and also to president Frei) by the neighborhood council of La Victoria, like the petition given to the mayor of Huechuraba, demanded that the state ensure the right to health care for all citizens:

We, the *pobladores* of *poblacion La Victoria*, demand that the state take action to ensure that all *pobladores* have access to real health care. This cannot be done by private means, because only those who have money can afford private health care. The ISAPRES benefit the wealthy because they profit from them, and because it discriminates against the poor.<sup>14</sup>

If we compare the demands of activists in La Victoria with those of the health care committees in Huechuraba, we see that they are rooted in fundamentally similar concerns, and they are framed in roughly similar terms: health care is a basic right that the poor should enjoy, and it is the government's responsibility to provide basic health care to all of its citizens.

The point here is to show that the grievances that motivated the protesters in the *poblacion* La Victoria and in the *comuna* of Huechuraba were anchored in the same set of

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<sup>14</sup>Petition written to the Mayor of the Municipality of Pedro Aguirre Cerda and to President Frei, May, 1999.

grievances--recognition of the social rights associated with health care--yet the protests that expressed these grievances took place in a localized, fragmented context. This is another example of how municipalities, perhaps unintentionally, compartmentalize and enframe spaces for collective action such that protest is more easily manageable and such that grievances are contained. Health care is one grievance that exists across communities, yet protests to express those grievances are localized and disarticulated from a national level focus.

In neither case were the fundamental demands of the protesters addressed. Instead, compromise solutions were reached that sideskirted the fundamental demands of the protesters (demands that at their root challenged the neoliberal conceptualization of health care as primarily reserved for the private sector). Thus, while the municipalities in these cases did not prevent protests from emerging, what they did do was to make protests more easily manageable by containing within the confines of the municipality--much like the role played by a firefighter. Thus, when these protests occurred in Huechuraba and La Victoria, they were easily co-opted by the respective municipalities.

The committee leaders wrote a petition to the mayor of Huechuraba, a woman named Sophia Prats (PPD), demanding that the municipality refrain from budget cuts that would reduce the amount spent on health care for women. They also sent a copy of the letter to Gloria Allende, a socialist municipal council member who rejects many of the features of the current neoliberal social order. Committee leaders felt that Gloria would be sympathetic to their demands. The petition demanded that the "health care rights of women and families be respected by the government" and that "the budget for infant nutrition programs be restored." When the municipal council refused to address their demands, they sent a letter to the minister of health, which also produced no results: the minister of health wrote back with a plea that they should understand the economic situation that the country was facing and that all Chileans would have to make sacrifices

during these difficult times. When Luzmenia showed me the letter from the health minister, she pointed out that it was that the poor and those who have little in the way of resources that always pay the price during economic downturns:

Whenever the government tells us that we have to “tighten our belts”, I don’t see “*los de arriba*” having to go without health care or without electricity. Only “*los de abajo*” suffer the consequences and have to make sacrifices. They screw up the economy and the *pueblo* pays. Like always...no?

Particularly galling for Luzmenia was the statement that all Chilean would have to make sacrifices:

What sacrifices do the rich make? Maybe they have to take one less trip to Europe, maybe they can’t buy this years Mercedes...meanwhile here in the *pobla*, women can’t feed their children. We now have several soup kitchens back in Huechuraba because of the crisis that the rich created.

When petition writing and face-to-face meetings with the mayor and ministry of health officials did not work, the committee met and voted to organize a sit-in (*toma*) at the Huechuraba health care clinic. However, going from writing petitions to a the occupation of a public space was a frightening prospect for some women on the committee. Some of the women were extremely reluctant about such an act of public confrontation, and they decided not to participation in the *toma*. Some feared going to jail. Others feared the reaction of their husbands and families:

If I don’t get home to make lunch for my husband, he gets angry. When he gets angry, he becomes a jerk. He doesn’t like me to participate as it is, and if I go to jail, I won’t be able to participate anymore.

The *machismo* of many men has been shown to be a powerful restraint on the participation of women in community organizations.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, for some women, participation is a type of everyday resistance in the family: by participating they assert their rights as citizens and challenge certain aspects of the hegemony of the husband in the house.<sup>16</sup> By participating in organizations, many women have carved out a limited space for personal autonomy.

<sup>15</sup>Sabatini, Francisco 1995. *Barrio y Participacion Mujeres Pobladoras de Santiago* Santiago: SUR

<sup>16</sup>de la Maza, Gonzalo and Margarita Iglesias “Mujer, Participacion y Democracia Segunda Consulta con

I tell my husband that this is something that I have to do, and that this is one thing that he has no right to tell me not to do. But I still have to get home by seven o'clock to make dinner.

However, there are limits to participation and the extent to which many women could participate. In short, many had to participate in ways that did not interfere with home life.

After much discussion about the pros and cons of a sit-in, a majority of the women decided to participate in the *toma*. Now they would have to gain the support of organized women in the community. Luzmenia is also a leader in the Huechuraba women's center, so she brought the issue up in the women's center and organized a public meeting at the *Union Comunal* to discuss the health care situation and the impact that cuts in spending on nutrition programs would have on the community. At the meeting, the women of the health care committee argued that the only way that the government would listen to their demands would be to mobilize and pressure the municipality and gain publicity for their demands.

Those attending the meeting were divided about the question of staging a *toma*. One group, reflecting the underlying conservative tendency that lurks in the *pasaje*, viewed such actions as essentially uncivilized. This conservative undercurrent, then, tends to fragment the consciousness of *pobladores* and divide the *pasaje*. Indeed, during the protests against Pinochet in Huechuraba, one could readily identify communities by clusters: the *poblaciones* that were created during *Operacion Sitio* and the wave of land occupations of the 60s were most likely to have participated in protest. By contrast, other *poblaciones* in Huechuraba were much more quiescent. The president of a mother's center in one of the original communities of Huechuraba reflected on the protests during the 1980s:

Here there was no protest, at most a couple of people banged pots,



but the protest came from *La Pincoya*, Pablo Neruda, and *Patria Nueva*. My *poblacion* is real peaceful, we don't get involved in crazy things like that....we're more civilized.

The women who reflect this conservative undercurrent tended to worry about their image as "respectable people." They viewed participation in organizations as strictly a social activity that has no political dimension. At their weekly meetings, they make tea, sew, and socialize, but they do not discuss politics and their organizations do not even get involved with the municipality. Their conversations revolve around community gossip and rarely touch upon political questions. To them a *toma* was the worst form of politics because it creates disorder in the community, and reflects badly on the image of the community. The leader of one of the mother's centers of Huechuraba wondered what image people would have of Huechuraba women: This is why we have a bad name...they do things like a *toma* and fight with the authorities...this is why we are looked at as '*rotos*'." These women tended to come from two types of communities: the original communities of Huechuraba that had been in existence prior to the 1960s, when the *poblador* movement emerged or communities that were created during the Pinochet regime.

Another group of women supported the idea of a *toma* in principle (i.e. they saw protest, even confrontational protest, as a fundamental right of citizenship), but saw such actions as futile in the current context. One woman stood up and reminded people of what happens in confrontations with the government: "All that will happen is we'll end up in jail, like when the *pobladores* tried to do a *toma* of land last year."<sup>17</sup> These views reflect one of the more basic effects of the dictatorship on perceptions: the state is no longer vulnerable and responsive to popular pressure.

Luzmenia and the committee members responded to these concerns by pointing out that in a democracy people have to organize to demand their rights and to pressure the government. "Not in this democracy you don't, or didn't you see what the *pacos* did to

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<sup>17</sup>In 1997 a homeless committee had attempted a land occupation on a vacant area of land in Huechuraba, which was quickly ended with the arrival of the police who used force to evict the squatters.

Dona Gladys the other day in Valparaíso?"<sup>18</sup> a voice from the back of the room retorted. In short, the room full of women mirrored the split in the *Union Comunal*. A small minority saw participation as a vehicle to pressure the government, and a majority, while supporting their right to do so, saw such actions as either a futile exercise that would end in failure, or as uncivilized behavior that is not proper.

Nevertheless, bearing signs and placards, the women of the health care committee and a few supporters closed the *consultorio* the next morning in protest. A large banner which read: "We Demand Our Rights, No to Health Care Cuts that Hurt *Poblador* Women!" was posted at the entrance to the *consultorio*. Luzmenia and a group of several dozen women blockaded the entrance of the Huechuraba clinic and demanded that the mayor and the municipality listen to their grievances. They posted a banner on the entrance of the clinic articulating their grievances and called the media to publicize the *toma*. As they closed the gates to the clinic, the news spread throughout Huechuraba that there was a *toma* at the *consultorio*. Approximately 75 women from different organizations in the community showed up to demonstrate their support for the occupation of the clinic. The unemployed youth of the *comuna* also showed up to take in the spectacle. The occupation of the *consultorio* began to take on an aspect of carnival and celebration as young people surrounded the gates of the clinic to watch the emerging repertoire of contention unfold. This is highly symbolic of the television generation, for whom watching passively has become the primary mode of interaction with the environment.

The occupation of the *consultorio* was seen as a means of attracting the attention of policymakers in the ministry of health. Luzmenia knew Alex Figueroa, the Christian Democratic health minister, very well and she was hoping that by occupying the clinic, the

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<sup>18</sup>The speaker was referring to protests led by the communist party in Valparaíso when Pinochet took his seat as Senator for life. Gladys Marin was beaten and tear gassed at the rally.

committee would persuade the minister to reconsider the budget cuts. The idea was that if the women were able to stir up enough publicity and trouble, the ministry would give in to their demands rather than attract unwanted attention. Thus, a combination of shrewd political calculation, a militant ideology, and personalistic politics shaped the actions of the health care committee.

The sit-in ended with the arrival of the mayor, her delegation of aides, and a small number of police that same afternoon, who reopened the clinic and told the women that they could either go home or go to jail. The response of the mayor and the municipality to the "*toma*" of the *consultorio* reveals a key role of the municipality: the role of "firefighter." The mayor and the representatives of the municipality that arrive at the scene of the protest resemble a firefighter: they are a kind of rapid response team that puts out the embers and the small brushfires that burn within the municipalities, and contain them before they get out of control. The embers of social conflict continue to smolder because the neoliberal juggernaut and the reorganization of popular movements has not yet produced a uniform, seamless popular culture. This is one way in which decentralization has been a bulwark of the status quo. Conflicts are contained within the confines of specific municipalities. Indeed, the boundary of the municipality acts much like the ditches that firefighters dig to contain brushfires. The response of the municipality to the protesters, and the ease with which the *toma* was brought about to a successful conclusion without extracting significant concessions from the municipality or the state, shows why the *Union Comunal* viewed local participation as a barrier instead of as a force for democratization.

The mayor, reflecting the attitude of the *concertacion*, pointed out that she does not negotiate under pressure. The women of the committee decided to sit down with the mayor and discuss the health care question. After the sit-in was over, the mayor and the leadership of the committee sat down and reached an agreement--the mayor would divert some of the funds from that year's Community Development Fund (*Fondo de Desarrollo*

*Vecinal*-- FONDEVE) to make up for some of the shortfall that year. The mayor, made it clear that this offer was as far as she was willing to go in accommodating the demands of the Huechuraba Health Care Committee. While she sympathized with the demands of the committee, the municipality did not have the resources to restore the budget. Indeed, she stressed that the municipality did not have the resources or the legal jurisdiction to go any farther in satisfying their demands. Any further demands would have to be directed to the ministry of health. However, aside from writing a letter to the health minister, most of the women realized that at the state level, they stood very little chance of success.

The mayor's offer, moreover, had defused the situation for the moment--as some of the women on the committee were content with the "victory" that they had achieved. Some of the women, as one of the committee members put it, "went home and forgot about it." The immediate conflict was patched over, but as Luzmenia observed, the conflict was not over:

These problems happen all the time...we are always in a crisis of some sort. This is because the government isn't dealing with the real problem in this country--the rich have too much and the poor have too little. The rich don't want to share with anyone...and they control the government. So instead, they patch up one problem and after a while another problem arises.

She said that things will continue as they are for a while and then some other event will provide the catalyst for another "in between" protest. In between these moments of protest, the committee would participate in government sponsored seminars and dialogues on the issue of health care, and write petitions for health care related projects. In short, Luzmenia painted a picture of state-society relations as a series of small, localized crises that are constantly flaring up as a result of the state's refusal (or inability) to incorporate the more basic and fundamental demands of the *pueblo*. The problem, she said "is that the people (*pueblo*) do not have the means to effectively kick and scream (*patalear*) for their rights."

Reflecting on the capacity of the *pueblo* to be a protagonist in the trajectory of Chilean history, Luzmenia (as well as many others) articulated a certain nostalgia for the pre-1973 period, and even for the military period, when the *pueblo* seemed to her to be much more of a protagonist the political arena. As she put it: "The *pueblo* doesn't have the weight that it used to before 1973...before when the *pueblo* spoke, the politicians had to listen or else we would bring the country to a standstill." This nostalgia for a bygone era of meaningful protagonic participation in pursuit of a utopian vision is neatly captured in an article written by the president of the neighborhood council of the Villa Francia--another *poblacion* known for its fierce battles against the dictatorship--that appeared in Punto Final, a left wing newsweekly:

The mystery of the crisis of the *poblador* movement and social organization is not difficult to unravel. Years ago, if there was something we could count on it was participation and the great social organizations. The collapse of the wall, the *pseudo-death of utopias*, the *delegitimization of politics* and the politicians, the economic and cultural models, the disempowering transition... these things more than our individual and collective incapacity to be protagonists and live according to our principles have left social organizations and any possible alternatives prostrated before the neoliberal altar.<sup>19</sup>

Social organizations (i.e. the different movements of the popular struggle) were for Luzmenia and others, "organizations of weight."

Indeed, the residues of the Allende experience echo through the streets of the "pobla" and rattle in the collective conscious of many of the *pobladores*. These residues and fragments are visible in the humble homes of many *pobladores* who display portraits of Allende in their living rooms as if to quietly but defiantly point out that "there was a time when we, the *pueblo* made history." Luzmenia proudly showed me a picture of her and Allende in 1972, when he came to visit her "pobla" when her home was being built: "He struggled for the *pueblo*, more than any of these people that claim to represent us today."

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<sup>19</sup>Ruz, Jose "Como Estamos En Mí Poblá" Punto Final Santiago March 1998 p.10

In the little dilapidated house on *Republica de Cuba* street in the *Poblacion Pablo Neruda* that serves as the offices of the Union of Neighborhood Councils of Huechuraba, the language in which the claim of the health care committee was articulated also reveals the faint outlines of counter-hegemony lurking just beneath the surface of the hegemony. It also reveals how the women on the health care committee had appropriated democratic discourse. The health care committee framed the question in terms of the rights of poor women in a democracy:

In a democracy, people are supposed to be equal. The meaning of democracy is equality. It is not possible that in democracy, poor women have such bad health care, where they have to wait a long time to see a doctor, they have to stand in line at four in the morning, in the cold to get a ticket to see the doctor, while *los de arriba* make a phone call and a doctor sees them immediately. Is that equality?<sup>20</sup>

For Luzmenia and the women of the health care committee, the rights of popular women are inextricably intertwined and embedded in the unequal relations between “*el pueblo*” and “*los de arriba*”. That is, her subject position as a woman is articulated with her subject position as a member of the “*pueblo*.”

Not surprisingly, for Luzmenia, the relationship between “*el pueblo*” and “*los de arriba*” is conceptualized in terms of a relationship of antagonism. That is, there is a direct relationship between her poverty and the wealth and privilege of the accommodated classes, which impinges on a whole range of issues, including the health care rights of women. “The reason that the women of the *pueblo*, the *pobladoras*, have terrible health care” she argued “is because the *gente de arriba* don’t want to share their wealth and redistribute the cake...they want it all for themselves.” The struggle for women’s rights is an intimate element of that broader dynamic. However, for Luzmenia this relationship is not an natural and immutable facet of the social order.

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<sup>20</sup>Interview with Luzmenia Toro and the Health Care Committee of Huechuraba

Thus, for this group, the question of women's rights--a relatively new site of antagonism and social conflict in Chile--is entangled in the question of social class. Teresa Valdes' study of poor women's organizations has pointed out that many of the women's organizations that first emerged in the 1980s and 1990s articulated their subject positions as oppressed women in terms of the language of social class.<sup>21</sup> Many women who participated in popular women's social movements during the dictatorship defined their organizations as "popular feminist" organizations (*organizaciones feminista-populares*). The status of "popular" (i.e. poor, oppressed) was strongly articulated to the status of women in many women's organizations (especially those linked to the left).

### Shaping the Terrain of Conflict

Nevertheless, the broader claims that go to the heart of the social question were never even articulated in the occupation of the *consultorio* and the subsequent negotiations with the mayor. The claims that were actually made by the committee in their conversations with the mayor merely demanded a restoration of the pre-1998 status quo. Thus, even before the conflict began, the current hegemony had, in effect, secured a victory by keeping off the table the deeper grievances that the protesters felt. In the context of the current structure, such demands seem unrealistic, so why even articulate them?

Why is this the case? In his study of the development of power relationships, Gaventa has argued that there are mechanisms of power that "influence, shape, or determine the conceptions of the necessities, possibilities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict." In the case of the health care committee of Huechuraba, it was not that the conceptions of subaltern actors were shaped by the system, it was that the power structure shaped the possibilities, strategies, and language of conflict. That is,

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<sup>21</sup>Valdes, Teresa and Marisa Weinstein 1993. Mujeres Que Suenan Las Organizaciones de Pobladoras en Chile 1973-1989 Santiago: FLACSO

away from the glare of power, in what could be called the subaltern counter public sphere, the health care committee developed its own interpretations of the world, but these interpretations were never articulated vis a vis the municipality. How is it possible to articulate a demand for nationalized health care in the context of the neoliberal world that has emerged since the transition. The leaders of the committee knew that the mayor would not (and could not) speak to these broader grievances, thus they focused on one narrow demand--restoration of the pre-crisis budget for women and children.

The state (or municipality) demands that issues be framed in a language that disarticulates the specific demand from the broader context that gives rise to them in the first place. The broader context (poverty, structural inequities, skewed distribution of power and wealth) remain on the periphery of the conflict. By accomplishing this, the terrain of conflict is defined in favor of the status quo even before the conflict begins. Even if the demands of the committee were fulfilled by the municipality, the basic dynamics of the social order remain essentially unchanged.

## Conclusion

The failure of the occupation of the clinic over the health care budget in Huechuraba illustrates one of the dimensions of the ongoing process through which the current hegemony keeps alternative interpretations that lurk on its periphery in check. Issues and grievances are broken down and compartmentalized, while popular movements are territorially and administratively enframed through decentralization so as to facilitate micromanagement and social control. When protest does occur within this atomized territorial and discursive context, it is dealt with on a piecemeal basis by the municipality, which functions as (1) a containment barrier (as the members of the *Union Comunal* astutely came to understand). (2) Secondly, the municipality functions as a kind of early warning station that handles popular protest before it can get out of control and become a broader movement. (3) Third, the mayor and the municipal bureaucrats, particularly those who deal with community development, can be seen as a quick response team.



The way in which such protests unfold in public space also serves as a reinforcing lesson to those who watch from the sidelines: do not try this because the state will not tolerate such actions. Thus, in between protests allow the state to demonstrate its capacity for social control, while claiming that there is tolerance and respect for dissent. Paradoxically, then, such protests can actually bolster the social order by (1) deepening the perception of immutability, and (2) fostering the illusion of democracy--i.e. the system allows for protest.

## CHAPTER 12

### CONCLUSION

What does this study of the municipality of Huechuraba tell us about the efforts to build and deepen democracy in Chile? This brief conclusion will attempt to summarize the arguments and findings of this study while answering this question. The Chilean case, I believe, can tell us much about the dynamics of hegemony and domination and its relationship to the neoliberal polyarchy that has emerged from the womb of the Pinochet dictatorship. Critical to post-transition polyarchy is the municipality. By examining the dynamics of the relationship between the “*muni*” and the organized community, we are in effect studying the dynamics of the complex trenches and earthworks that Gramsci argued insulate and protect liberal democracies from extra-liberal challenges. Indeed, in the decade following the transition, the “*muni*” has become the compartmentalized and fragmented locus of popular civil society in post-transition Chile. It is in these trenches that the low key struggle between civil society and state is now unfolding.

The Chilean case has implications that extend beyond Chile: the devolution of responsibilities and capacities to local government, the effort to build a civic network of small grassroots organizations, and the objective of building civic capacities and citizenship have become a dominant concern throughout Latin America and the developing world. These themes, furthermore, have become a common feature in the language and rhetoric of both the political right and the political left, which testifies to the hegemonic nature of the post-transition project. In many ways, then, post-transition politics can be understood in terms of the attempt by a consensually unified political elite to reorganize popular civil society.

The transition to democracy in Chile, however, did create a euphoric sense of empowerment among citizens, that in many ways was at odds with the objectives of political elites. When they took to the streets to demand democracy in the early and mid 1980s, the *pobladores* of Huechuraba and other poor communities in urban Santiago sensed that there were possibilities for meaningful social and political change. They also had developed their own understanding of democracy that placed them at the center of the decisionmaking process. Their conceptualization of democracy articulated the liberal understandings of democracy as "government by the people, of the people, and for the people" to a material understanding of democracy rooted in popular understandings of the discourses of Marxism and Catholic social action that defined democracy in terms of a fairer and more equitable distribution of economic resources. *Poblador* leaders from all political tendencies believed that the effective participation of citizens in decisionmaking would allow for the creation of a more equitable society in which material resources would be distributed more equitably. Participation, then, was seen as a way of influencing government in ways that would alleviate the social problems in the *poblaciones* and as a mechanism with which to expand the social dimension of citizenship.

However, within a year after the transition, the euphoria and hope that was created by the transition to democracy had been dashed and a deep disillusion with post-authoritarian politics had set in. Indeed, by the end of 1991, the "democratic moment" in the *poblaciones* was largely over: the *concertacion* had effectively squelched such popular understandings and appropriations of democracy and had disarticulated the social movement networks that had emerged in many *poblaciones* during the transition process. The story does not end there, however, because the *concertacion's* actions since then have gone well beyond the standard government actions to disarticulate, co-opt, exclude and marginalize potential challengers. In the decade following the transition, the *concertacion* has built on the legacy of the dictatorship's economic and political restructuring to effectively reorganize civil society and harness grassroots social

organizations to a project that has hegemonic aspirations. State and municipal funding for community development projects has been one of the tools used to reorganize the infrastructure of popular civil society. In the municipality of Huechuraba certain groups--those who were less politicized and more loyal to the status quo--were favored by the funding process. Too, some organizations (the soup kitchens, for example) were transformed into commercial enterprises subject to the exigencies of the market, which changed the internal ethos of the organization from solidarity and mutual assistance to an entrepreneurial logic.

The core dimension of this project however, as documents of the Division of Organizations have shown, entails building a space for the practice of citizenship. In effect, the objective has been to mold a durable set of citizenship practices, i.e. what could be called a habitus of civic citizenship where the citizenship practices that support a liberal capitalist polyarchy are nurtured. The discursive underpinnings for this project are found in the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm.

To explain the process of reorganization and citizenmaking, this study has argued that the hegemonic paradigm of democracy and citizenship in late 20th century, what I call the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, can be more fruitfully understood by viewing it through a Foucaultian lens; i.e. through the rubric of discipline. Discipline is an appropriate prism through which to understand this project because several of the basic components of a discipline have been central to the *concertacion*'s endeavor: the redistribution and partition of groups and individuals, training procedures, and the control of activity. What is novel in the Chilean case is that disciplinary techniques--which have strong authoritarian overtones--have been used in the attempt to advance polyarchy.

Thus, this study has argued that the *concertacion*'s vision of citizenship and participation in the post-authoritarian period, which I called "social participation", had emerged to become a discourse in the Foucaultian sense of the term: social participation had become a field of knowledge framed by certain assumptions and axioms derived from

the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm. Moreover, this field encompasses and underpins a set of power relationships. Social participation creates a discursive space within which the state is attempting to transform popular political culture. The discourse of social participation can be understood in the context of developmental democracy--the notion that participation can make better citizens. When viewed as a totality, then, this discourse contemplates a significant transformation in the practice of citizenship and in the political culture in which citizenship practices are embedded. The attempt to reorganize the spaces in which citizens participate can also be understood through the analytical prism of enframing--the creation of juridically defined territorial and administrative spaces in which participation and associational life is distributed and compartmentalized. Enframing should be understood as a technique of discipline that is used to forge and shape a habitus of citizenship. This dynamic also exposes what would seem to be a theoretical paradox: the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm--a language of democracy and participation--is being wielded as a discourse that underpins a disciplinary process in the social space of citizenship.

A central axiom of the discourse of social participation is that participation in small grassroots organizations at the local level is essential to democratic development and to the creation of a "civic culture"--a set of political orientations that underpins citizenship in a liberal capitalist polyarchy. Thus, decentralization and the creation of a vibrant local political arena are seen as crucial requirements of the discourse of social participation. Following Tocqueville's insights, it has been argued that decentralization creates an arena of participation where citizens can have a greater role in governance and where citizens can learn how to participate, or as Tocqueville put it "schools of democracy." Municipal government, then, is also understood as a space where the practices and habits of citizenship can be developed.

However, the devolution of power to the municipalities through decentralization, one of the pillars of the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm, has had contradictory effects: on one

hand it has brought government “closer to the people”, which has facilitated citizen access to government and has made local government more relevant in the daily life of popular communities. Municipal governments now oversee important social welfare policies--health care, education, and other social welfare services--and interact extensively with citizens. The municipality has also emerged to become the primary arena for the practice of citizenship. In one sense, then, decentralization has facilitated the exercise of citizenship by bringing the space of government closer to the daily lives of people.

By the same token, however, decentralization has brought people closer to government, creating a “panoptic effect” of increased legibility as well as an “enframing effect” of greater fragmentation and compartmentalization. Indeed, the enframing effect can be viewed as complementary to building a panoptic municipality that is capable of penetrating and transforming popular civil society. The process of decentralization has been an important dimension in the fragmentation of the social movement networks that emerged in the 1980s. Decentralization compartmentalized these networks into discrete territorially defined units--the municipality. This has endowed the state with a significantly greater capacity for social control--a social control that lurks beneath an exterior democratic veneer, and which has many undemocratic tendencies and implications. Indeed, the process of administrative reorganization of state has changed the nature and dynamics of social control.

Thus, while decentralization has created a new space for citizen participation, it is a space which is also shaped by the municipality and the state. The municipality, as we saw, used its resources to, in effect, reorganize civil society. In distributing resources to some organizations more than to others, municipal officials were able to wield a powerful form of control over local organizations. Beyond the use of resources, however, encounters between municipal officials and leaders of grassroots organizations--such as the community development planning meetings (PLADECO)--became spaces in which municipal officials carefully managed and guided the conversation and the dialogue in

ways that enforced the basic rules of what is expressible in the context of the discourse of social participation. Social workers at these meetings encouraged a participatory style that steered away from discussion of political issues and that instead focused on small, piecemeal goals. Furthermore, municipal officials were careful to emphasize that such interactions constituted the epitome of democratic participation and were a basic right of citizenship. Encounters between the municipality and grassroots organizations, then, have been instrumental in shaping a style and mode of interaction between grassroots organizations and the state. That is, they have been instrumental in shaping a “civic etiquette”—a style of interaction and rules of public discourse—that encourages organizational leaders to focus on achieving tangible objectives and to eschew politicized discussions that were defined as obstacles to getting things done. Indeed, in an effort to show tangible results and accomplishments, potentially divisive issues were carefully sidestepped and avoided. In avoiding political debates and discussions, however, people are increasingly less able to analyze the political world and have come to see it as an alien sphere that is to be avoided. In short, what one scholar has called a “culture of political avoidance”<sup>1</sup> is being subtly shaped in the context of compartmentalized participation.

While such participatory styles are indeed a form of empowerment of citizens—they achieve tangible results that can easily be pointed to as the result of participation according to the rules of social participation—such styles also influence the public sphere qualities of participation by limiting and constraining the discussion of issues. In short, more critical modes of citizenship were discouraged by this form of participation. This “civic-volunteer style” mode of participation disarticulated local piecemeal issues from a broader political context and turned them into narrowly defined technocratic issues that served to depoliticize and ritualize certain styles of participation,

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<sup>1</sup> Eliasoph, Nina 1998. *Avoiding Politics How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* Cambridge University Press

while excluding other forms. Interactions between the municipality and the organized community (such as the series of meetings organized by DIDECO to discuss community development, or the leadership schools sponsored by the central government) created, then, a space in which participation was broken down and reorganized into a series of steps. In short, these compartmentalized niches became spaces for the extension of the techniques of disciplinary society to the realm of citizenship.

Small grassroots organizations that participate extensively with local government have been seen as one of the key contextual pillars for developing a civic culture and social capital--i.e. horizontal networks built upon the basis of trust and cooperation. Indeed, scholars working within the neo-Tocquevillian paradigm have focused much of their attention on the conditions that lead to the development of social capital, which they see as one of the basic building blocks out of which viable democracies are built. Some of the organizations in Huechuraba's *poblaciones*, as we saw, have indeed served as spaces for trust to develop and for networks of cooperation to flourish. In short, a form of social capital would seem to have emerged within some of Huechuraba's grassroots organizations. The women's organizations (*centros de madre*), for example, were organizations that were based upon dense networks of interaction that were sustained by trust and solidarity that had been built over many years of interaction. Furthermore, organizations also occasionally cooperated with each other to achieve community objectives, leading to the development of localized networks of reciprocity that on occasion resembled Putnam's<sup>2</sup> horizontal networks of civic engagement. These organizations also facilitated the task of local governance by providing a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between the municipality and local civil society.

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<sup>2</sup>Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press



It can be plausibly argued, however, that the social foundations for the creation of this trust are not found so much in formal organizations like neighborhood councils and women's centers, as it is located in the myriad of informal spaces for sociability--the local *negocio* where people met everyday to buy goods and where the act of purchasing something is embedded in a dense web of social relations that go beyond market exchange, the narrow *pasaje* where people meet everyday in casual conversation, their patios where they socialize with their neighbors while carrying on with the daily business of survival. Formal organizations-- neighborhood councils, women's centers, sports clubs, etc.--are built upon an already existing cultural milieu that is forged in the thousands of daily informal encounters that take place in the course of everyday life. These informal horizontal encounters served to build trust among the *vecinos* in a community. It is within the context of these informal encounters that residents of the *pobla* built the *pasaje*. The patterns of sociability that were forged in these informal spaces became the model for sociability within formal organizations. In short, interactions within associations and between associations were a reflection of the historical process through which community was forged. The political culture that was created in this process is reflected in contemporary associations.

These informal spaces, however, have been largely ignored in studies of democratization. I will hazard a reason why this has been the case: perhaps because such spaces are largely alien to contemporary American community, where social mobility, access to cars, and patterns of development and use of space have made such informal spaces of sociability virtually non-existent. Indeed, in American suburbia there is no space comparable to the "*negocio*" or to the *pasaje* (zoning laws preclude such uses of space). Instead, people go to the supermarket where transactions are not embedded in such extra-market social relations. In American suburbia, community is built through formal organizations, not through informal encounters on the streets. Indeed, as we saw in the study of Huechuraba, the arrival of the megamarkets and the massification of credit

mechanisms is slowly transforming the spaces that nurtured the development of community. The patterns of sociability that gave rise to community--the *negocio* for example--are being undermined by the arrival of the megamarkets and the Home Depots where the act of consumption is not accompanied by networks of sociability. The arrival of the Carrefour in Maipu illustrates how the megamarket has changed patterns of living and modes of sociability in the *pasajes* of the *pobla*. Too, cable television, now accessible to almost everyone, is also having a major impact on the dense network of ties to which the historical creation of the community gave rise.

It is also important to note that while many of these organizations served to sustain trust and solidarity within the organization, participation did not serve to create much in the way of a sense of political efficacy. Participants in grassroots organizations did not seem to lead to a significantly greater sense of political efficacy than among non-participants. While there was a small positive relationship between participation in community organizations and a perception of influence over municipal government (i.e. a limited form of civic competence), vis a vis the national government there was no relationship: participants and non-participants saw themselves as equally powerless vis a vis the national government. This further underscores the emergence of a perceived gap between citizens and the national government. Moreover, participants understood the limitations and constraints of participation at the municipal level. Interviews with leaders of community organizations clearly show that they understood that participation in the municipality would not significantly change the status quo, and that they were getting what Luzmenia once described to me as the "bread crumbs that fall off the table." Influence vis a vis the municipality was understood in limited terms, largely as an ability to gain access to funds for community development, and not as a means to shape and influence major policy decisions. Thus, when people said that they had "influence" over municipal government, they meant that they had some say in the distribution of access to community development funds. Local organizations were not a panacea for addressing the

more fundamental problems facing the *pobladores* of Huechuraba, which are rooted in the inequities of neoliberal capitalism.

Too, while attention has been centered on small grassroots organizations interacting with local government as spaces for building the horizontal networks of civic engagement that are seen as essential to citizenship, and that are built upon a foundation of social capital, little has been said about the effects of decentralization and the compartmentalization of political space on the public sphere and on political discourse. What impact has this compartmentalized pattern of state-society relations, embedded within the overarching discourse of social participation, had on the development of a subaltern counterpublic (i.e. the subaltern equivalent to the public sphere, where subalterns develop their own understanding of reality)? Political deliberation and discourse are essential to any form of democracy. The ability to define issues, to decide what sorts of questions are worth discussing, and to develop frameworks for understanding issues is crucial to citizenship in a democracy. This is the function of a public sphere. In short, the existence of spaces where people can come together and discuss important issues is essential to democratization.

The juridical and territorial compartmentalization and enframing of political space that decentralization represents has had a pervasive effect on the development of a subaltern public sphere. Indeed, a new political language--what could be called the language of "the local" is emerging within the context of *muni* politics. This new political idiom eschews politicized debate in favor of a focus on small piecemeal gains: the provision of more funds for the local health care clinic instead of expanding basic health care rights, the construction of more public housing projects instead of a basic change in housing policy, petitioning for funds to build a community center instead of a discussion of basic rights. Indeed, it is possible to speak in terms of the "projectification" of participation: the overwhelming focus of public collective action is access to community development projects. The discursive frame of reference that forms the underlying basis

for political discussion has been significantly transformed by the compartmentalization of political space and the discourse of social participation. In short, public speech is largely devoid of all utopian visions and instead is centered on achieving small gains within the framework of existing hegemony. In short, decentralization has had an impact on a fundamental power that citizens should possess: the power to determine meaning and to decide what is worthy of public debate, in short, the power to come together as a subaltern counterpublic.

At the same time, however, although hegemonic, the idiom of “the local” and the community development project has generated its own forms of subaltern resistance. Council leaders have found ways to appropriate the modalities and discourses of social participation for the purposes of resistance, something which was unforeseen by policymakers. The language of social participation and local politics generates its own form of fragmented “in between” forms of resistance that are fragmented, atomized and largely invisible to the state. The rhetoric of democracy and citizen participation has been appropriated in ways that were unpredictable. Thus, we saw how some council leaders became a thorn in the side of the municipality with their constant presence in the offices of DIDECO and their constant pursuit of community development funds. In short, the behavior of many council leaders shows how hegemonic orders generate their own forms of resistance that at times can be effective obstacles to state goals and objectives. Nevertheless, it is also true that these forms of resistance take place largely on the terrain of the dominant. That is, they are forms of resistance that do not threaten to undermine the status quo.

Finally, I conclude with reflections on possibilities for future research. The emergence of the language of “the local” as a frame of reference (at the expense of a broader understanding) is occurring in the broader context of a macrolevel process of globalization that is transforming the world in many ways. Thus, an important question for future research, I believe, will be to understand how the dynamics of “the local” and

the enframing of citizenship in the compartmentalized space of the municipality is articulated to the process of globalization that is taking place, where some scholars have posited the emergence of a new paradigm of “imperial sovereignty” and control: Empire.<sup>3</sup> There are linkages between the municipality of Huechuraba and the larger process of globalization that is taking place. Indeed, the glowing arches of the McDonald’s that are being built in popular communities--and the drastic reorganization of social space that this entails--are signs of the arrival of Empire, of the interpellation of the *pobla* with the sovereignty of Empire. How then does the language of the local articulate with the new paradigm of sovereignty and control that is posited in Empire?

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<sup>3</sup>Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri 2001. Empire Cambridge: Harvard University Press

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edward Greaves was born in Guatemala in 1960 and grew up overseas, primarily in Latin America (Guatemala and Chile) and the Middle East (Israel). While growing up, he also lived in the Phillipines, Belize, and Algeria. He graduated from the American school in Kfar Shmaryahu in Israel and attended the University of Florida in Gainesville, where he obtained a BA in political science in 1992. His interest in Chile is in large measure the result of having lived in Chile during the last year of the Allende government and the subsequent coup that ended Chile's democracy. He won a Fulbright scholarship to do one year of research for this dissertation in 1999-2000. He then completed a Ph.D. in political science, also at the University of Florida in 2002.

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